

 Broughton & Milton Keynes PARISH COUNCIL		Policy Name: Communication Policy (MASTER) Policy Number: BMK-PC04 Version: 2.0		
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Approved by and date:		Cllr Tim Small		
Responsible Committee:		Full Council		
Version No	Date Ratified / Amended	Date Implemented	Next Review Date	Reason for Change (eg, full rewrite, amendment to reflect new legislation, minor change etc)
1.0	06/11/17 (12.5.2)	28/12/17	Dec 19	Full rewrite
2.0	02/09/19 (FC19/20-75.2)	11/09/19	Sept 20	Amendment

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Parish Council's Communications Policy is to set out the standard procedures for dealing with all communications to and from the Parish Council (including media statements, the website, correspondence, e-mails and social media), including communications from individual Parish councillors and communications between Parish Councillors and Officers.

2. COMMUNICATION WITH THE PARISH COUNCIL

- 2.1 The point of contact for the Parish Council is the Parish Clerk.
- 2.2 It is the duty of the Parish Clerk to keep all Parish Councillors fully informed about communications from the public, Milton Keynes Council and other authorities and agencies.
- 2.3 The Parish Clerk should deal with all correspondence as directed by the Parish Council following a meeting.
- 2.4 No individual Councillor, Officer or member of staff should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information (both electronically and/or written) in the name of the Parish Council, a committee, subcommittee or working party.
- 2.5 All communications should be logged, date stamped with date of receipt when not automatic and dealt with within a specified timescale, as agreed by the Parish Council.
 - 2.5.1 Communications must be acknowledged within three working days.

- 2.5.2 A full reply must be sent within a maximum of ten working days, or a communication sent explaining why this is not possible.
- 2.5.3 Communication for individual Parish Councillors received by the office, should be informed to them within two working days.

2.6 Where any correspondence (including email) sent to the Parish Council or individual Parish Councillors is recognised as being a formal complaint, it should be passed without comment to the Parish Clerk and will be dealt with according to the Parish Council's Complaints Policy.

3. PUBLISHED AGENDA ITEMS & MINUTES FOR COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

3.1 Agenda items should be clear and concise and follow an agreed format. They should contain sufficient information for members and the public to understand what is to be discussed and/or decided.

3.2 Items for information should be kept to a minimum on Parish Council agendas.

3.3 Where Parish Councillors wish fellow Councillors to receive matters for "information only", this information should only be copied into the Parish Clerk if relevant to the Parish Clerk being kept up to date on matter(s).

3.4 Parish Councillors are free to exchange information, ideas and drafts of documents by email when this assists the work of the Parish Council.

4. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

4.1 Press reports and comments from the Parish Council and committees should be issued by the Parish Clerk or nominated Councillor on behalf of the Council or by a reporter's own attendance at a meeting.

4.2 Where Parish Councillors are in contact with the media they should keep their comments to factual material, including the Parish Council's agreed position (if one has been agreed) or information that is already in the public domain. This can include public statements agreed by the Parish Council and/or content that is already on the Parish Council website or discussions held in public at Parish Council meetings or its committees (this excludes working groups).
If they choose to express any personal opinions, they be clearly identified as such.

If Parish Councillors feel uncomfortable responding to an enquiry from the media, they should look to pass the request without comment to the Parish Clerk or nominated councillor of the Parish Council.

- 4.3 All personal correspondence from a Parish Councillor to third parties should make it clear that the views are the expression of the personal opinions of the writer and not necessarily those of the Parish Council unless the Parish Council has agreed that this is a statement on its behalf.
- 4.4 It would be good practice if a copy of all outgoing correspondence from Councillors relating to the Parish Council or one's role within it should be sent to the Parish Clerk.
- 4.5 Where decisions are required by Parish Councillors on external bodies these should be put on a suitable agenda. If it is necessary to give an answer on the spot, the Parish Councillor should make it very clear that the opinion given is their personal opinion and is subject to agreement/discussion by the Parish Council.
- 4.6 Parish Councillors and Officers must not make any defamatory remarks about the Council, its service users, employees, Councillors or conduct themselves in a way that is detrimental to the Council.
- 4.7 No individual Parish Councillor should speak on behalf of the Parish Council unless doing so with Parish Council knowledge and consent, unless in relation to recognised facts or information already in the public domain, specifically content that is already on the Parish Council website or discussions held in public at Parish Council meetings or its committees (this excludes working groups).
- 4.8 Details about customers, partners or suppliers should not be referred to without their prior written approval (ensuring no advertisement of the services or goods of third parties).
- 4.9 Parish Councillors must refrain from promoting themselves as working for the Council, in a way which has, or may have, the effect of bringing the Council into disrepute.
- 4.10 Officers and Parish Councillors must not disclose personal data or information about the Council, or its service users, employees or Councillors that could breach the Data Protection Act.

5. SOCIAL MEDIA

- 5.1 Individual Parish Councillors may post factual material on social media about subjects relevant to the Parish Council or local residents. This can include material that is in the public domain, such as public statements agreed by the Parish Council and/or content that is already on the Parish Council website or

discussions held in public at Parish Council meetings or its committees (this excludes working groups).

They may also post personal comments/opinions, as long as they are clearly identified as being as being so. Parish Councillors should be mindful that what is published will be in the public domain indefinitely.

- 5.2 Information should be accurate, fair, thorough and transparent.
- 5.3 Compliance with data protection, intellectual property and copyright laws should be ensured.

6. INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS WITHIN THE PARISH COUNCIL

- 6.1 Parish Councillors, must not give instructions to any Officer or member of staff to act on behalf of the Parish Council unless properly authorised to do so by the Parish Council or a committee of the Parish Council.
- 6.2 Reports from Parish Councillors and Officers attending outside bodies should be provided to the Parish Clerk to be circulated on regular basis to keep members informed of local issues.
- 6.3 All Parish Councillors should be respectful and thoughtful in the level of communication they have with Officers. Communications should be relevant to the work of the Parish Council and specific in their intent. Electronic communication should not have an expectation of an immediate response, unless it is a genuine emergency or of an urgency already agreed by the Parish Council. Face-to-face meetings should be pre-arranged, with reasonable notice.