



# **North Walsham Town Council**

## **Communications Protocol**



## 1 Introduction

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- 1.1 This document covers communications relating to Members of the Town Council, Council staff, members of the public, other bodies, and the press.

## 2 Correspondence and information sent to the Council

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- 2.1 The official point of contact for the Council is the Town Clerk. All correspondence to the Council should be addressed to the Town Clerk.
- 2.2 The Town Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting of the Council.
- 2.3 No individual Councillor should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the Council, a committee, a sub-committee, or a working group.

## 3 Agenda items of Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups

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- 3.1 Agenda items should be clear and concise. They should contain sufficient information for members to make an informed decision. Items for information should be kept to a minimum on Council agendas. Where Councillors wish colleagues to receive matters “for information only”, this information should be circulated via the Town Clerk.

## 4 Communications with the Press and Public

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- 4.1 Press reports from the Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups should be from the Town Clerk or another officer of the Council or via the reporter’s own attendance at a meeting.
- 4.2 If Councillors are asked for a comment by the press or members of the public, **unless it is absolutely clear that they are reporting the official view of the Council, it should be stated clearly that such comments or views are the personal views of the Member.**

- 4.3 When using social media, Councillors must make it absolutely clear from the outset that any comments they are making are that Member's personal views. This applies particularly to the North Walsham Town Council Facebook group, where the default understanding of members of the public is that any comments by Councillors represent the views of the Council. Councillors must not allow themselves to be drawn into lengthy discussion or argument about matters over which the Town Council has no control.
- 4.4 If Councillors wish to make a complaint, or receive a complaint from a member of the public, this should be passed in writing to the Town Clerk so that it can be dealt with under the Council's complaints procedure or by a Council agenda item. The name and address of the complainant should be on record.

## 5 Correspondence between Councillors and other bodies

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- 5.1 All personal correspondence as a Councillor to other agencies should make clear that the views expressed are those of the individual and not necessarily those of the Council.
- 5.2 A copy of all outgoing correspondence relating to the Council or the Councillor's role within it should be sent to the Town Clerk, and the correspondence should make clear to the addressee that this is the case.

## 6 Communications with Town Council staff

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- 6.1 Council staff are answerable to the Council as a whole, through the Town Clerk, and not to individual Councillors. Councillors **must not** give instructions to any member of staff unless specifically authorised to do so by the Council or the urgency of the request justifies direct contact (for example health and safety matters on Council-owned property). In any event, the Town Clerk **must** be notified of any instructions given to staff.
- 6.2 Telephone calls should be kept to a minimum, and relate to the Council.
- 6.3 Emails should be kept to a minimum. Instant replies from the Town Clerk should not be expected, and reasons for urgency should be stated clearly. Matters for information should be directed to other Councillors via the Town Clerk.
- 6.4 If an acknowledgement is requested in an email from the Town Clerk, Councillors should provide this.

- 6.5 If Councillors wish to meet with the Town Clerk to discuss matters of Council business, an appointment should be made. When requesting an appointment, the matters for discussion should be made clear.

This protocol shall be reviewed annually.

This version of the Communications Protocol was adopted on 28 July 2015

- **Minute Ref.150728\_Council Minutes\_Para 16**