

# STANTON UPTON HINE HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

## COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL

ADOPTED BY COUNCIL IN MAY 2020

To be reviewed in March 2022

*This Protocol is adopted from the model Protocol set out in the Governance Toolkit for Parish & Town Councils Version 3 April 2009.*

### **A. Parish Council Correspondence**

- (i) The point of contact for the Parish Council is the Clerk, and it is to the Clerk that all correspondence for the Parish Council should be addressed.
- (ii) The Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting.
- (iii) No individual Councillor or Clerk should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the Parish Council, a committee, sub-committee or working party. In particular, Councillors and the Clerk do not have a right to obtain confidential information/documentation unless they can demonstrate a 'need to know'.
- (iv) All official correspondence should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the Council using council letter headed paper or the Parish Council email address.
- (v) Where correspondence from the Clerk to a Councillor is copied to another person, the addressee should be made aware that a copy is being forwarded to that other person (e.g. copy to XX).

### **B. Agenda Items for Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Parties**

- (i) Agendas should be clear and concise. They should contain sufficient information to enable Councillors to make an informed decision, and for the public to understand what matters are being considered and what decisions are to be taken at a meeting.
- (ii) Items for information should be kept to a minimum on any agenda.
- (iii) Where the Clerk or a Councillor wishes fellow Councillors to receive matters for "information only", this information will be circulated via the Clerk.

- (iv) The Clerk will communicate regularly with Parish Councillors. Any email may be sent to the Chairman or a Councillor which requires a response. If this email is copied to others 'for information' in the cc. section, no response is required or action necessary.
- (v) The use of 'reply to all' is mostly unnecessary and serious consideration should be given before using this tool.
- (vi) Email should not be used as a consultation tool for any decision. All decisions of Council should be included on an agenda for consideration which should then result in a democratic decision.

#### **C. Communications with the Press and Public**

- (i) The Clerk will make all press reports, or comments to the media, available to the Chairman of the Council or the Chair of the relevant committee, prior to sending. If appropriate, they may be sent to other Councillors 'for information only' using the cc section of the email.
- (ii) Press reports from the Council, its committees or working parties should be from the Clerk or via the reporter's own attendance at a meeting.
- (iii) Unless a Councillor has been authorised by the Council to speak to the media on a particular issue, Councillors who are asked for comment by the press should make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as their personal view. Alternatively, please direct all enquiries to the Clerk.
- (iv) Unless a Councillor is absolutely certain that he/she is reporting the view of the Council, as agreed by the Council, they must make it clear to members of the public that they are expressing a personal view.
- (v) If Councillors receive a complaint from a member of the public, this should be dealt with under the Council's adopted complaints procedure, or via a council agenda item.

#### **D. Councillor Correspondence to external parties**

- (i) As the Clerk will be sending most of the Council's correspondence to other bodies, even when from other Councillors, it needs to be made clear that it is written in their official capacity and has been authorised by the Parish Council.
- (ii) A copy of all outgoing correspondence relating to the Council or a Councillor's role within it, should be sent to the Clerk, and it be noted on the correspondence, e.g. "copy to the Clerk" so that the recipient is aware that the Clerk has been advised.

## **E. Communications with Parish Clerk**

- (i) Councillors must not give instructions to the Clerk, or any employee, unless authorised to do so (for example, three or more Councillors sitting as a committee or sub-committee with appropriate delegated powers from the Council).
- (ii) No individual Councillor, regardless of whether or not they are the Chairman of the Council, the Chairman of a committee or other meeting, may give instructions to the Clerk which are inconsistent or which are in conflict with Council decisions or arrangements for delegated power.
- (iii) Telephone calls should be appropriate to the work of the Parish Council.
- (iv) E-mails:
  - Instant replies should not be expected from the Clerk; reasons for urgency should be stated. However, the Clerk will respond as soon as practicably possible.
  - Information to Councillors should normally be directed via the Clerk and information/requests from Councillors should be directed to the Clerk
  - E-mails from Councillors to external parties should be copied to the Clerk;
  - Councillors should acknowledge receipt of e-mails;
  - Councillors should not use a shared email address for Parish Council business
  - A Parish Councillor email address is preferred as this can then be publicised on the PC website, magazine, noticeboard etc.
  - An email sent to a Councillor is for action or response, unless specifically identified as for information (fyi). When copied to other Councillors, this is for their information only and not necessarily requires a response.
  - Correspondence between the Clerk and Councillors should remain confidential, until confirmed either by the Clerk or by inclusion on a meeting Agenda.
  - The Clerk will inform Councillors if she will be unable to respond for a period of time (such as a holiday or due to illness).
  - It would also be useful if Councillors used an out of office response in order that any delay in gaining a reply can be dealt with appropriately.
  - The Clerk will acknowledge receipt or respond to all email communication.