



KINGSMEAD

PARISH COUNCIL

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Communication & Media Policy

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1. Document details

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1.1. Revision history

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1.2. Approvals

This document requires the following approvals:

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1.3. Distribution

This document has been distributed to:

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2. Introduction

This policy sets out the Kingsmead Parish Council methodology and procedures for both its internal and external communications using appropriate media and technologies at its disposal.

The purpose of this document is to formalise the position of the council with respect to its commitment to maintaining reliable and robust internal communications methodologies within its day to day running and external communications with its outside customers/stakeholders and importantly with the Press and Public.

The procedures contained in this Policy apply equally to both council members and employees.

3. Parish Council Correspondence

- a) 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.
- b) The clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting.
- c) No individual Councillor should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the parish council, a committee, sub-committee or working party.
- d) All official correspondence should be sent by the clerk in the name of the council using council letter headed paper.
- e) 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.

4. Agenda Items for Council & Committees

- a) 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.
- b) Items for information should be kept to a minimum on an agenda.
- c) Where the clerk or a councillor wishes fellow councillors to receive reports to be noted this information should be received by the Clerk will be circulated with the agenda.

5. Communications with the Press and Public

- a) The clerk will clear all press reports, or comments to the media, with the Chair of the council or the Chair of the relevant committee.
- b) Press reports from the council, its committees or working parties should be from the clerk or an officer or via the reporter's own attendance at a meeting.
- c) The Openness of LG Bodies Regulation 2014 became law on 6 August 2014, allowing filming, photography and/or recording of council proceedings by the press or public. The chairman of the meeting should ask if any person intends to do any of these so that councillors are aware. No oral report or verbal running commentary is permitted during the meeting.
- d) 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.
- e) Unless a councillor is absolutely certain that he/she is reporting the view of the council, they must make it clear to members of the public that they are expressing a personal view.
- f) 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.

6. Councillor Correspondence

- a) As the clerk should be sending most of the council's correspondence from a councillor to other bodies, it needs to be made clear that it is written in their official capacity and has been authorised by the parish council.
- b) 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 so that the recipient is aware that the clerk has been advised.

7. Communications with Parish Council Staff

- a) No individual councillor, regardless of whether or not they are the chair of the council, the chair of a committee or other meeting, may give instructions to the clerk or to another employee which are inconsistent or conflict with council decisions or arrangements for delegated power.
- b) E-mails: - Instant replies should not be expected from the clerk, but the clerk will attempt to respond in a timely manner to urgent matters. - Information to councillors should normally be directed via the clerk; - councillors should acknowledge their e-mails when requested to do so.

8. Social Media

This policy is in place to assist Councillors to minimize the risk of being found to have breached the adopted Code of Conduct through their use of social media.

It applies to use of social media whenever you are acting in the capacity of Parish Councillor as well as personal use in your private capacity that may affect the Parish Council in any way.

9. Personal use of Social Media

Parish councillors should never use their Parish Council address to set up social media accounts.

10. Prohibited use

- a) You may never make any social media communications that could damage the Parish Council's interests or reputation, even indirectly
- b) You may not use social media to defame or disparage the Parish Council, other Parish Councillors, the Parish Council staff or any third party
- c) You must not harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against other Parish Councillors, the Parish Council staff or any third party
- d) You must not make false or misleading statements or impersonate other Parish Councillors, Parish Council staff or any third party
- e) You must not do anything to jeopardise the Parish Council's confidential information and intellectual property.
- f) Please do not include the Parish Council logo or other trademarks in any social media posting or in your profile on any social media.

11. Guidelines for responsible use of Social Media

- a) You must make it clear in Social Media postings, and/or in your profile, whenever you are speaking on your behalf in your capacity as an elected representative of the Parish Council.
- b) You must be respectful to others when making any statement on Social Media and be aware that you are personally responsible for all communications (including posting or sharing images and sharing other content online) which will be published on the internet for anyone to see.
- c) You must ensure that your profile and any content you post is consistent with your capacity as an elected representative of the Parish Council.
- d) If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, please refrain from posting until you have discussed it with the Clerk.
- e) If you see Social Media contents that disparages or reflects poorly on the Parish Council, other Parish councillors, the parish Council staff or any third party, please contact the Clerk.

12. The use of Social Media and Mobile Devices at Public Council Meetings

- a) Use Mobile Devices sparingly, discreetly and with common sense at meetings, considering the impression they are giving to others. Remember that someone may be recording the meeting.
- b) Frequent use of these devices during meetings may give the public the impression that you are not paying full attention to an item that is being discussed in a debate on a decision that is to be made
- c) Councillors may use mobile devices to access Council documents (agenda, reports pack) during a meeting in order to minimise printing
- d) Avoid the following use:

- Using Social Media during meetings or during the consideration of confidential or exempt items of business at meetings
- Frequently checking emails and messages that are not related to the meeting
- Taking and sending electronic images of proceedings

13. Breach of this Policy

Breach of this Policy may be a breach of the Code of Conduct.