

Bromyard and Winslow Town Council

Communications Protocol

Members are reminded that any recorded information, including reports, correspondence, emails and comments on social media can be subject to Freedom of Information requests, General Data Protection Regulation requests or to libel action

A. Town Council Correspondence

- (i) The point of contact for the Town Council is the Clerk and it is to the Clerk that all correspondence for the Town Council should be addressed.
- (ii) The Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting.
- (iii) No individual councillor or officer should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the Council, a committee, sub-committee or working party. In particular councillors and officers 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.
- (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) Agenda should be clear and concise. They should contain information with sufficient detail 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 only should be kept to a minimum on an 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.

C. Communications with the Press and Public

- (i) Press reports or comments to the media, including social media, by the Clerk will be cleared with the Chair of the Council or the Chair of the relevant standing committee.
- (ii) Press reports or comments to the media, including social media, from the Council, its committees or working parties, from an officer other than the Clerk or by the Chair of Council or the Chair of the relevant standing committee, should be cleared by the Clerk, or may be via a reporter’s own attendance at a meeting.
- (iii) When making comments to the media or posting on social media councillors should be careful to distinguish when making comment personally and not use words or phrases which imply or give the impression they are speaking on behalf of the Council, unless they are the Chair of Council or of a standing committee and are making comment in compliance with (ii) above.

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- (iv) If councillors receive a complaint from a member of the public this should be dealt with under the Council's adopted Complaints Procedure.

D. Communications with Town Council Staff

- (i) Councillors must not give instructions to any member of staff, 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 Chair of the Council, the Chair of a committee or other meeting, or are styled "Leader" of the Council, may give instructions to the Clerk or to another employee which are inconsistent or conflict with Council decisions or arrangements for delegated power.
- (iii) Telephone calls should be appropriate to the work of the Town Council.
- (iv) E-mails:

Instant replies should not be expected from the Clerk or other officers; reasons for urgency should be stated;

Information to councillors should normally be directed via the Clerk;

E-mails from councillors to external parties should be copied to the Clerk;

Councillors should acknowledge their e-mails when requested to do so.

- (v) Meetings with the Clerk or other officers:

Wherever possible an appointment should be made;

Meetings should be relevant to the work of that particular officer;

Councillors should be clear that the matter is legitimate Council business and not matters driven by personal or political agendas.

This protocol was reviewed and adopted by Bromyard & Winslow Town Council on the 29th April, 2019