



SANDOWN TOWN COUNCIL

Communications Policy

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COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

1. AIMS

- 1.1. To establish clear, easy to use channels of communication between Sandown Town Council and the residents of Sandown and vice versa.
- 1.2. To provide information on important matters in an appropriate manner so as to facilitate and encourage informed comment from interested individuals and groups.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. Each Councillor has a duty to represent, without bias, the interest of the whole community and is available to help parishioners with regard to matters relating to Sandown. They may be contacted by telephone or email (if available) and a contact list is displayed on the council notice board and on the council website.
- 2.2. If the matter is important, then a letter to the clerk or their deputy will ensure that this will be brought before the council and dealt with in a suitable and professional manner. It is the council's intention to comply with the schedule as below.

3. COUNCIL MEETINGS

- 3.1. A period of up to 15-minute public question time will be held at the beginning of each Council Meeting 15 minutes are available for members of the public to speak on matters relating to the agenda.
- 3.2. 10 minutes are available for members of the public to speak on any matters relating to town business at the end of the agenda.
- 3.3. The Council will meet in the main hall at the Broadway Centre, unless otherwise notified.
- 3.4. Council meetings will be called by the Town Clerk or their Deputy Clerk.
- 3.5. **Ordinary Meetings**
 - 3.5.1. The council will normally meet at 7:00 pm on the third Monday of the month as the council directs at least three times a year.
- 3.6. **Annual Meeting**
 - 3.6.1. The Annual Meeting will take place in May each year.
 - 3.6.2. Councillors will elect the Mayor and appoint the Deputy Mayor for the coming year at the Annual Meeting of the Council.
- 3.7. **Town Meeting**
 - 3.7.1. The annual Town Meeting will take place in between March and June each year.
 - 3.7.2. The Town meeting will be called by the Mayor.
 - 3.7.3. The town meeting will be an opportunity for any Sandown Government Elector to discuss any public matter relating to or effecting Sandown.
 - 3.7.4. A minimum of 5 days' notice must be given to the Town Clerk or their deputy of any issue to be raised.

3.8. Agenda Items for Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Parties

- 3.8.1. Agenda 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.
- 3.8.2. Items for information should be kept to a minimum on an agenda
- 3.8.3. Where the Clerk or a Councillor wishes fellow Councillors to receive matters for “information only”, this information will be circulated via the Clerk.
- 3.8.4. If a resident wishes a matter to be formally discussed at a Town Council meeting, then the clerk must be notified at least 14 days prior to the meeting to enable the item to be placed on the agenda.

4. NOTICE BOARDS

4.1. The following items will be displayed permanently:

- Councillors with contact telephone numbers and email addresses
- Council meetings dates for the year
- Notice of the annual audited accounts will be displayed when appropriate.

4.2. The agendas pertaining to council meetings will be displayed 5 days in advance of the meeting.

4.3. Notices of public meetings will be displayed as and when appropriate.

5. WEBSITE

5.1. The following items will be permanently available:

- Councillors with contact telephone numbers and email addresses
- Council meeting dates for the year once confirmed
- The approved minutes from the next council meeting.
- Financial information including bank reconciliations and annual budget
- The Mayors Annual Report
- All statutory documents including Standing Orders and Financial Regulations
- All adopted policies
- Details of the Publication Scheme

5.2. The clerk will ensure that council information included on the website is regularly updated.

5.3. Any council information on the website will be agreed by the clerk and/or the mayor before publication.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

6.1. **Council Correspondence**

- 6.1.1. The clerk is the main point of contact for the town council.
 - 6.1.2. All correspondence relating to the town council should be addressed to the clerk in the first instance. This will ensure that the matter is recorded and passed to the relevant person or organisation as soon as practicably possible.
 - 6.1.3. All correspondence to the clerk will be acknowledged within one week of receipt.
 - 6.1.4. All official correspondence should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the council using council letter headed paper.
 - 6.1.5. 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. cc)
- 6.2. 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'.

6.3. **Councillor Correspondence to external parties**

- 6.3.1. 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 Town council.
- 6.3.2. 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.

7. COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

- 7.1. 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.
- 7.2. 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.
- 7.3. 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.
- 7.4. 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.
- 7.5. 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.

8. COMMUNICATIONS WITH TOWN COUNCIL STAFF

- 8.1. 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).
- 8.2. No individual Councillor, regardless of whether or not they are the mayor 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.
- 8.3. Telephone calls should be appropriate to the work of the Town council.

8.4. E-mails:

- 8.4.1. Instant replies should not be expected from the Clerk; reasons for urgency should be stated;
- 8.4.2. Information to Councillors should normally be directed via the Clerk;
- 8.4.3. E-mails from Councillors to external parties should be copied to the Clerk;
- 8.4.4. Councillors should acknowledge their e-mails when requested to do so.

8.5. Meetings with the Clerk or other officers:

- 8.5.1. Wherever possible an appointment should be made;
- 8.5.2. Meetings should be relevant to the work of that particular officer;
- 8.5.3. Councillors should be clear that the matter is legitimate council business and not matters driven by personal or political agendas.