



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, the Clerk, Councillors 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.
- 2.2. 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.
- 2.3. 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 in a suitable manner.
- 2.4. It is the council's intention to comply with the schedule as below.

3. NOTICE BOARDS

- 3.1. The following items will be displayed permanently:
 - Councillors with contact email addresses
 - Council meetings dates for the year
 - Notice of the annual audited accounts will be displayed when appropriate.
- 3.2. The agendas pertaining to council meetings will be displayed 5 days in advance of the meeting.
- 3.3. Notices of public meetings will be displayed as and when appropriate.

4. WEBSITE

- 4.1. The following items will be permanently available:
 - Councillors with contact 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
- 4.2. The clerk will ensure that council information included on the website is regularly updated.

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

5. CORRESPONDENCE

5.1. **Council Correspondence**

5.1.1. The clerk is the main point of contact for the town council.

5.1.2. 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.

5.1.3. All correspondence to the clerk will be acknowledged within one week of receipt.

5.1.4. All official correspondence should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the council using council letter headed paper.

5.1.5. 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)

5.2. 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.

5.3. Councillors and officers do not have a right to obtain confidential information/documentation unless they can demonstrate a 'need to know'.

5.4. **Councillor Correspondence to external parties**

5.4.1. 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.

5.4.2. 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.

6. COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

6.1. The Clerk will clear all press reports, or comments to the media, with the Mayor or the Chair of the relevant committee.

6.2. 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.

6.3. 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.

6.4. 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.

6.5. If Councillors receive a complaint from a member of the public, this should be dealt with under the Council's adopted complaints procedure.

7. COMMUNICATIONS WITH TOWN COUNCIL STAFF

- 7.1. 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).
- 7.2. 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.
- 7.3. **Telephone** calls should be appropriate to the work of the Town council.
- 7.4. **E-mails:**
 - 7.4.1. Immediate replies should not be expected from the Clerk; reasons for urgency should be stated;
 - 7.4.2. Information to Councillors should normally be directed via the Clerk;
 - 7.4.3. E-mails from Councillors to external parties should be copied to the Clerk;
 - 7.4.4. Councillors should acknowledge their e-mails when requested to do so.
- 7.5. **Meetings with the Clerk or other officers:**
 - 7.5.1. Wherever possible an appointment should be made;
 - 7.5.2. Meetings should be relevant to the work of that particular officer;
 - 7.5.3. Councillors should be clear that the matter is legitimate council business and not matters driven by personal or political agendas.

8. COUNCIL MEETINGS

- 8.1. 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.
- 8.2. 10 minutes are available for members of the public to speak on any matters relating to town business at the end of the agenda.
- 8.3. The Council will meet in the main hall at the Broadway Centre, unless otherwise notified.
- 8.4. Council meetings will be called by the Town Clerk or their Deputy Clerk.
- 8.5. **Ordinary Meetings**
 - 8.5.1. 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.
- 8.6. **Annual Meeting**
 - 8.6.1. The Annual Meeting will take place in May each year.

8.6.2. Councillors will elect the Mayor and appoint the Deputy Mayor for the coming year at the Annual Meeting of the Council.

8.7. Town Meeting

8.7.1. The annual Town Meeting will take place in between March and June each year.

8.7.2. The Town meeting will be called by the Mayor.

8.7.3. The town meeting will be an opportunity for any Sandown Government Elector to discuss any public matter relating to or effecting Sandown.

8.7.4. A minimum of 5 days' notice must be given to the Town Clerk or their deputy of any issue to be raised.

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

8.8.1. An Agenda should be clear and concise, containing 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.

8.8.2. "Information only" should be kept to a minimum on an agenda.

8.8.3. Where the Clerk or a Councillor wishes fellow Councillors to receive matters for "information only", this information will be circulated via the Clerk.

8.8.4. 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.



SANDOWN TOWN COUNCIL

Electronic Communications and Social Media Policy

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The use of electronic communications and digital and social media enables the town council to interact within the council, with residents and with those it works with.
- 1.2. The council has a website, Facebook and uses email to communicate. Overtime the council may add other channels of communication as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers.

2. SCOPE OF POLICY

- 2.1. This policy is intended to guide all employees and Councillors make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as blogs, social networking websites, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.
- 2.2. This policy outlines the standards the Council require employees, volunteers and Councillors to observe when using social media in relation to council matters; the circumstances in which your use of social media will be monitored and the action the Council will take in respect of breaches of this policy.
- 2.3. All employees and Councillors are always expected to comply with this policy to protect the privacy, confidentiality, reputation and interests of the Council.
- 2.4. Breach of this policy by employees may be dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.
- 2.5. Breach of this policy by Councillors may be dealt with under the procedure for breaches of the Code of Conduct and may be reported to the Monitoring Officer of the Local Authority.

3. Responsibility for implementation of the policy

- 3.1. The Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
- 3.2. The Town Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to the Council's work.
- 3.3. All employees and Councillors should ensure that they take the time to read and understand this policy. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the Town Clerk.
- 3.4. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Town Clerk.

4. Communications from the Council

- 4.1. Communications from the Council will meet the following criteria:
 - a) Be civil, factual, and relevant.

- b) Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive.
- c) Not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright.
- d) Not contain any personal information.
- e) If it is official Council business, it will be moderated by either the Chair/Vice Chair of the Council, committee Chair or Vice Chair or the to the Council.
- f) Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising

5. Town Council Website

- 5.1. Where necessary, we may direct those contacting us to our website to see the required information, or we may forward their question to one of our Councillors for consideration and response.

6. Town Council email

- 6.1. The Clerks have their own council email address - clerks@sandowntowncouncil.gov.uk.
- 6.2. The email account is monitored mainly during office hours, Monday to Friday, and we aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as we can. An 'out of office' message should be used when appropriate.
- 6.3. The Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and passing on any relevant mail to members or external agencies for information and/or action.
- 6.4. All communications on behalf of the Council will usually come from the Clerk, and/or otherwise will always be copied to the Clerk.
- 6.5. All new emails requiring data to be passed on, will be followed up with a Data consent form for completion before action is taken with that correspondence.
- 6.6. Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views and on other concerns, and if appropriate, copy the Clerk.
- 6.7. Councillors' council email accounts should be used for council business.
- 6.8. All emails regarding council business will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act.
- 6.9. Do not forward personal information on to other people or groups outside of the Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.
- 6.10. Statutory time frame for answering requests by email

7. Other methods of communication

7.1. This policy also applies to other forms of communication used for council business including but not limited to SMS Messaging and video conferencing (skype, zoom, teams etc.)

8. Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act in all their work on behalf of the Council

8.1. As more and more information become available at the press of a button, it is vital that all information is treated sensitively and securely.

8.2. Councillors are expected to maintain an awareness of the confidentiality of information that they have access to and not to share confidential information with anyone.

8.3. Members should also be careful only to cc essential recipients on emails i.e. to avoid use of the 'Reply to All' option if at all possible, but of course copying in all who need to know and ensuring that email trails have been removed.

8.4. Failure to properly observe confidentiality may be seen as a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct and will be dealt with through its prescribed procedures (at the extreme it may also involve a criminal investigation).

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