

# **CLAXBY PARISH COUNCIL – COMMUNICATIONS POLICY – DRAFT v6**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This policy covers both internal and external, written, verbal and non-verbal communication. Communications between members of the Council to parishioners, external organisations and between themselves will follow the principles of the Councillors' Code of Conduct. In order to ensure that all communications between the Council and members of the community are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives (section 2 below) the Council asks all parties to meet the following criteria:-

- 1.1 Be civil, considerate, relevant and respectful of others.
- 1.2 Avoid using content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive.
- 1.3 Be aware of copyright laws, avoid using content knowingly copied from elsewhere, and give credit where credit is due.
- 1.4 Avoid including any personal information.
- 1.5 Be aware and mindful of data protection, bias and predetermination.
- 1.6 Be accurate and stay on topic.

## **2. AIMS & OBJECTIVES**

The Council's communication policy will aim to:-

- 2.1 Establish clear, easy to use channels of communication between the Council, parishioners, external organisations and vice versa.
- 2.2 Be open and transparent.
- 2.3 Provide information on important matters in an appropriate manner.
- 2.4 Raise resident's satisfaction, trust and confidence levels.
- 2.5 Raise awareness of services provided by the Council.
- 2.6 Raise the profile of Claxby as a parish.
- 2.7 Support Councillors in their role as community leaders.
- 2.8 Make best use of all communication methods in order to reach all members of the community.

## **3. COMMUNICATION GUIDANCE**

3.1 The point of contact for the Parish Council is the Clerk who should receive all correspondence which ought formally to be brought to the attention of the Council. Contact details are available on the noticeboard, Website and in the newsletters.

3.2 All official correspondence sent by the Clerk is in the name of the Council. It is important that all Council communications undertaken by the Clerk are effective and in so doing must be:-

- a) Short and to the point
- b) Courteous
- c) In plain English
- d) Based on facts and information
- e) In a consistent format and style
- f) Clear about any action required or taken

3.3 No individual Councillor, nor 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.

3.4 Councillors and the Clerk do not have the right to obtain confidential information/documentation unless it is pertinent to their official duties.

3.5 Councillors should make it clear, in all communications, that they have no authority to represent the Council's views unless they have been given a specific, minuted, mandate to do so at a Council meeting.

3.6 Councillors should not raise any expectations before a matter has been debated and agreed at an appropriate Council meeting.

3.7 In the event of any enquiry, the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, is responsible for issuing a response as agreed by the Council. Individual members of the Council must make clear if they are approached for comment directly, whether they are giving an **individual or personal opinion** or **referring the matter to the Council for a formal response**. In the former case, Councillors should be fully aware and mindful of the policies and decisions of the Council and respect the integrity of fellow Councillors and the Clerk. It must be made clear that the response is from the individual concerned and **NOT** from the Council.

3.8 The Clerk and the Chair must be notified of any contact with the media as soon as possible.

3.9 Any advice relevant to Council business given to a Councillor by third parties and which affects their opinion on any such matter should be declared at Council meetings.

3.10 The Council will appoint members to represent the Council on community organisations when requested.

3.11 From time to time, the Council may include volunteers to "sit" on working groups/sub-committees to enhance communication and engagement.

3.12 The Clerk has delegated authority to determine the most appropriate form of communication method to ensure the timely dissemination of information whilst adhering to this and other Council Policies.

#### **4. METHODS OF COMMUNICATIONS**

The Council encourages engagement with the community so that views can be heard and needs established. This is achieved through both informal and formal means.

Informal means include Councillors' day to day contact with the Community, information notices and newsletters. More formal means of gathering views include public consultations and surveys together with public participation in Regular and Extraordinary Parish Council Meetings and sub-committee meetings.

##### **4.1 Parish Council Meetings and Committee meetings.**

4.1.1 Details of agendas and minutes of current and past Council and Committee meetings are available to residents on the website. Current agendas and minutes are displayed on the Council noticeboard.

4.1.2 All Council meetings, including sub-committees, are open to the public to attend unless the business to be conducted at the meeting is of a confidential nature (Standing order 3d)

4.1.3 A 10-minute Open Forum is held at the beginning of each Parish Council Meeting. Individual members of the public may speak for no more than three minutes on agenda

items. A question raised shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate. The Chair may direct that a written or oral response be given. Members of the public are then welcome to stay for the rest of the meeting. Individuals may be invited, by the Chair, to contribute to specific items on the agenda for which they have relevant knowledge or expertise.

4.1.4 The Annual Parish Meeting also provides an opportunity for everyone to raise issues, discuss Council activities over the past year and objectives for the next year.

#### **4.2 Surveys**

The Parish Council may periodically carry out surveys to gather resident's opinions on projects affecting their community. There would then, usually, be a Public Consultation before plans are debated and decisions made at a Parish Council Meeting.

#### **4.3 Council Noticeboard**

Priority is given to official Council documents such as agendas, public notices, election information and legal issues affecting the Council. Placing of other notices is at the discretion of the Clerk.

#### **4.4 Newsletters**

The Council will produce the Parish newsletters in conjunction with all community groups and residents. The Clerk, Councillors and volunteers will compile, edit, print and arrange distribution of the newsletters.

#### **4.5 Emails**

This is the preferred form of communication between residents and Councillors. Email communication is covered under the Council's Privacy Notice and the Electronic Communication and Social Media Policy.

#### **4.6 Website**

The Council's website <https://claxby.parish.lincolnshire.gov.uk> provides an informative online resource for residents and visitors. See Council's Privacy Notice and Electronic Communication and Social Media Policy.

#### **4.7 Telephone & SMS messaging**

Other forms of communication i.e. email or written correspondence are preferable to the above forms of communication. See Council's Electronic and Social Media Policy.

**4.8 Communication with the press** – See Council's Electronic and Social Media Policy.

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