



## LISKEARD TOWN COUNCIL

### COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

#### Aims

- To set out how we will communicate with staff, Members, partners, local residents and the media.
- To ensure all communications are consistent and co-ordinated across all channels
- To develop excellent, innovative and cost-effective communications to increase awareness of the Council's services and achievements and improve the reputation of the Council
- Promote high quality customer service and ensure that everyone in the Council understands their role in delivering this

#### Outcomes

All communications issued by the Liskeard Town Council will be:

- **Open and honest** – direct, truthful and factual
- **Timely** – up to date information communicated regularly, consistently and quickly
- **Clear and concise** – Plain English and jargon free – easily understood by all sectors of the community
- **Accessible** – easy to access through appropriate media / channels and in mixed format
- **Relevant** – targeted at the needs of the intended audience, appropriate information, informative and useful
- **Inclusive** – face to face communications wherever possible, designed to encourage and value discussion and feedback. Information available in suitable formats, and website meeting the requirements of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018

#### A. Town Council Correspondence

- (i) The point of contact for the council is the Town Clerk, and it is to the Town Clerk, or the official delegated to the relevant role or task, that all correspondence for the town council should be addressed.
- (ii) The appropriate committee 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 town council, a committee, sub-committee or working party. Councillors and Officers do not have a right to obtain confidential information/documentation unless they can demonstrate a 'need to know'.
- (iv) All official communications should be sent by the Town Clerk, or the official delegated to the relevant role or task, in the name of the council using council letter headed paper or approved email signature.
- (v) Where correspondence from the Town 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).
- (vi) All communications should be compliant with the relevant data protection legislation.

#### **B. Agenda Items for Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Parties**

- (i) The agenda should be clear and concise. It 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.
- (ii) Items for information should be kept to a minimum on an agenda.
- (iii) Where the Town Clerk or a Councillor wishes fellow Councillors to receive matters for "information only", this information will be circulated via the Town Clerk, and be circulated to all Councillors.
- (iv) Discussion and decision making should only take place by email in exceptional circumstances, or where agreed by committee, and should be strictly limited to the specific brief.

#### **C. Communications with the Press and Public**

- (i) The Town Clerk, or ~~Support Services Manager~~ RFO & Deputy Town Clerk will clear all press reports, or comments to the media, with the Town Mayor or the Chair of the relevant committee as appropriate.
- (ii) Press reports from the council, its committees or working parties should be from the Town Clerk or an officer or via the reporter's own attendance at a meeting.
- (iii) Unless a Councillor has been authorised by the council to speak to the media on an 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.

- (iv) Unless a Councillor is 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.
- (v) 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.
- (vi) Designated staff are authorised to promote the work of the Council on social media but strictly in accordance with the approved Social Media policy of the council.
- (vii) In making public comments, Councillors must respect decisions made by a majority vote.

**D. Councillor Correspondence to external parties**

- (i) Individual Councillors are responsible for their own ward member correspondence. The Town Council does not provide a secretariat for such purpose. Councillors must ensure they make clear where they are informing on official policy and where they are stating their personal views.
- (ii) When using a Town Council email account, Councillors must always reflect the view of the Council.
- (iii) A copy of all outgoing correspondence, including email relating to the council or a Councillor's role within it, should be sent to the Clerk, or the appropriate designated official and the recipient made aware that the Clerk or designated/delegated official has been advised.

**E. Communications with Town Council Staff**

- (i) Councillors must not give instructions to any member of staff, unless authorised to do so through the Council's decision-making process and with their line manager's agreement.
- (ii) No individual Councillor, regardless of whether or not they are the Town Mayor or 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.
- (iii) Telephone calls should be appropriate to the work of the town council.
- (iv) Instant replies should not be expected to e-mails from the Clerk; reasons for urgency should be stated;
- (v) Councillors should acknowledge their e-mails when requested to do so.

- (vi) For meetings with the Clerk or other officers an appointment should be made wherever possible, meetings should be relevant to the work of that officer and Councillors should be clear that the matter is legitimate council business and not matters driven by personal or political agendas.

### **Summary**

Liskeard Town Council is committed to effective communications to ensure the Council's operations, priorities, objectives, values, ambitions and challenges are better understood by all our audiences - both internal and external.

Adopted by the Liskeard Town Council 3 September 2018

**Review September 2019**

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