

# Communications Policy

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## Definitions

**NPC** – Nocton Parish Council

**Clerk and/or Proper Officer** – The Clerk to Nocton Parish Council

**Council** – Nocton Parish Council (NPC)

**Members** – All Councillors of Nocton Parish Council

**Parish** – the villages of Nocton and Wasps Nest

**Staff/Officer(s)** – All employees of Nocton Parish Council

**PC email** – the designated email Account for Nocton Parish Council for correspondence

**Council Resolution** – a decision made by the Parish Council by vote

## 1. Parish Council Email Account

The above email account is the main source of information coming into NPC from external bodies.

These communications are not routinely copied to Members' designated email addresses and this is done to enable the clerk to use his/her limited time available to maximum effect.

It is recommended that Members make themselves aware of matters raised in such incoming correspondence and any responses that these may generate via the clerk's Report and other reporting prior to meetings.

It is considered good practice for Members to conduct Council business through a dedicated email address.

So that all Members and Staff are kept informed of communication activity, it is required that a copy of any correspondence from a Members dedicated email address is forwarded to the PC email account.

- Following an update to the General Data Protection Regulations (25 May 2018) it is considered best practice for all PC emails to be via a secure designated email system.

## 2. Parish Council Correspondence

- a) The point of contact for the Parish Council is the Clerk, and it is to the Clerk that all correspondence for NPC should be addressed. In certain circumstances it is agreed by Council Resolution that individual Members may be the point of contact; all such correspondence must be copied to the Clerk via the PC email account.
- b) The Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting.
- c) No individual Member or Officer should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of NPC, a Committee, Sub-Committee or Working Group. Members and Officers do not have a right to obtain confidential information/documentation.

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- d) Where necessary, official letters should be sent by the Clerk in the name of NPC using PC letter headed paper.
- e) Where correspondence from the Clerk to a Member 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)
- f) All correspondence between Members relating to NPC matters to be copied to the Clerk at the PC email account.
- g) In the interests of Transparency, incoming/outgoing correspondence will not be regarded as private and confidential in terms of it being of restricted availability to Members and the Clerk even where this may have been requested by the originator, except where this conflicts with the Data Protection Act.

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

- a) Agendas should be clear and concise. They should contain sufficient information to enable Members 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.
- b) Items for information should be kept to a minimum on an agenda.
- c) Where the Clerk or a Member wishes fellow Members to receive matters for “information only”, this information will be circulated via the Clerk.

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

- a) The Clerk will clear all press reports, or comments to the media, with the Chair of NPC or the Chair of the relevant committee.
- b) Press reports from NPC, its committees or working parties should be from the Clerk or an Officer or via the reporter’s own attendance at a meeting.
- c) Unless a Member has been authorised by NPC to speak to the media on a particular issue, Members who are asked for comment by the press should make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it must be clearly reported as his/her personal view.
- d) Unless a Member is absolutely certain via written confirmation, that he/she is reporting the approved view of NPC, they must make it clear to members of the public that they are expressing a personal view.
- e) If Members receive a complaint from a member of the public, this should be dealt with under NPC adopted complaints procedure, or via a NPC agenda item.

### **5. Councillor Correspondence to external parties**

- a) As the Clerk should be sending most of NPC correspondence from a Member to other bodies, it needs to be made clear that it is written in his/her official capacity and has been authorised by NPC.
- b) A copy of all outgoing correspondence relating to NPC or a Member’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 Parish Council Staff**

- a) Members must not give instructions to any member of Staff, unless authorised to do so (for example, three or more Members sitting as a committee or sub-committee with appropriate delegated powers from the council).
- b) No individual Member, regardless of whether or not they are the Chair of NPC, the Chair of a committee or other meeting, or are styled “Leader” of NPC, may give instructions to the Clerk

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or to other Staff which are inconsistent or conflict with NPC decisions or arrangements for delegated power.

c) Telephone calls should be appropriate to the work of NPC.

d) E-mails:

- i. Instant replies should not be expected from the Clerk; reasons for urgency should be stated
- ii. Information to Members should normally be directed via the Clerk through the PC email
- iii. E-mails from Members to external parties should be copied to the Clerk via the PC email
- iv. Members should acknowledge e-mails when requested to do so

e) Meetings with the Clerk or other Officers:

- i. Wherever possible an appointment should be made
- ii. Meetings should be relevant to the work of that particular Officer
- iii. Members should be clear that the matter is legitimate NPC business and not matters driven by personal or political agendas

Re-Adopted on Date.....15/10/19

Review of this policy is due : October 2020
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