

# Marlesford Parish Council – Adopted November 2023

## Communications Protocol/Social Media Guidance

### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this protocol is to define the roles and responsibilities within the Council regarding communications. It is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules and regulations. Rather, it provides guidance on how to deal with issues that may arise for example when dealing with the media

### 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 the parish council should be addressed.
- b) The Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting.
- c) No individual Councillor or Officer should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the parish council, a committee, subcommittee 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'.
- d) All official correspondence should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the council using council letter headed paper.
- e) 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. copy to XX).

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

- a) Agendas 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.
- b) Items for information should be kept to a minimum on an agenda.
- c) Where the Clerk or a Councillor wishes fellow Councillors 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 Chairman of the Council or the Chairman of the relevant committee.
- b) Press reports from the Council, its committees or working parties should be from the Clerk or via the reporter's own attendance at a meeting.
- c) Unless a Councillor has been authorised by the Council to speak to the media on a particular issue, Councillors who are asked to 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.
- d) Unless a Councillor is reporting the view of the Council, they must make it clear to members of the public that they are expressing their personal view.

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

## **5. Councillor Correspondence to External Parties**

a) As the Clerk should be sending most of the Council's correspondence to other bodies, it needs to be made clear, by the Councillor, that it is written in their official capacity and has been authorised by the parish council.

b) All personal correspondence as a Councillor to other agencies should make it clear that the views expressed are the personal opinions of the writer and not necessarily those of the council.

c) 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

d) Correspondence from the Clerk marked "Confidential" must be treated as such and not be disclosed to anyone

e) If a member of the public requests a copy of any correspondence from a councillor, the matter should be referred to the Clerk who will consider whether the correspondence is in the public domain

## **6. Communications with Parish Council Staff**

a) Councillors must not give any instructions to any member of staff, unless authorised to do so (for example, three or more Councillors sitting as a Committee with delegated powers from the Council).

b) No individual Councillor, regardless of whether or not they are the Chairman of the Council, the Chairman of a Committee or other meeting, may give instructions to the Clerk or another employee which are inconsistent or conflict with council decisions or arrangements for delegated power.

c) Telephone calls should be appropriate to the work for the parish council.

d) Emails:

- Instant replies should not be expected from the Clerk; reasons for urgency should be stated;
- Information to Councillors should normally be directed via the Clerk;
- Emails from Councillors to external parties should be copied to the Clerk;
- Councillors should acknowledge their emails when requested to do so.

e) Meetings with the Clerk or other Officers:

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

## **7. Data Protection**

All communications should comply with the Councils then current Data Protection Policy.

**Adopted by Marlesford Parish Council at the meeting of  
17<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Item 5.d**

**Signed by the Chairman     Roger Waterfall**