



Communication Policy

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.

The Clerk will deal with all routine correspondence which does not commit Hackleton Parish Council to spend money outside of the current year's budget or provided for in the Scheme of Delegation, enter into a legal agreement or give an opinion. The Clerk will also deal with any correspondence which is covered by delegated authority. The Clerk will report all other correspondence to the next Parish Council meeting (with copies being provided to councillors ahead of the meeting as considered appropriate by the Clerk). If urgent action is required, the Clerk will consult with the Chairman, or if the Chairman is not available with the Vice Chairman.

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

Any correspondence between councillors or with members of the public or outside bodies in connection with Council business must be copied to the Clerk.

Communications with the Press and Public

The Clerk will clear all urgent press releases, or comments to the media, with the Chairman of the Council or the Chairman of the relevant committee.

A Councillor should only express views on behalf of, or appearing to represent the Parish Council, if they have been instructed to do so by the Council or, if it reflects the agreed policy of the Council.

If a Councillor is communicating via social media or traditional media, they must make it clear to members of the public that they are expressing a personal view, unless they have been asked to represent the Council. 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.

Media Communications and Articles

Council must approve all non-urgent media contributions either at a full meeting or by email (email circular asking for approval – 5 days' notice is acceptable for speed, no reply from a councillor is assumed to be acceptance).

The Chairman (or Vice Chairman if the Chairman is not available) and Clerk can agree a statement in an emergency and use discretion – usually circulating council and giving as much time as feasible for comment.

For content that changes such as local club calendars etc. – council can approve the page purpose and allow that organisations nominated person to put changes in place via the Clerk.

Use of social media in a private capacity whilst holding public office requires that comments are legal and follow the standards required in the Code of Conduct. The following general rules must be adhered to:

- Do not post, upload or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.
- Don't escalate heated discussions. Try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.
- Be honest and open but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make on peoples' perceptions of you and the Council.
- Private statements by councillors that address parish issues – must include a statement that these are personal views and not those of council. Statements that are not related to Hackleton Parish do not need this if no mention is made of Hackleton or Councillorship.

Website & Social Media

The Council is committed to operating a website hosted by a 3rd party provider, having no other connection with Hackleton Parish Council. The present host is 2Commune. The current system is a "Content Management System" where the Council itself has direct control of day-to-day editing and updating.

The Website shall contain material the Council is required by law to publish and that arises from Council business, such as agenda, minutes, policies, information about the Council and Councillors. It may also include any material that has been commissioned by the Council, such as reports or surveys or material that is directly derived from these.

The Website shall in principle not contain material of a deliberately contentious, offensive, or disputatious nature, or material that criticises or implies criticism of one or more members of the public, individual Councillors, groups of Councillors or the Council as a whole.

Regardless of what has been voted on by Council, the Website shall not contain any material that is libellous or defamatory or in any way against the law or which could expose the Council to legal challenge.

The day-to-day working of the Website is subject to the control of the Clerk who is empowered by Council to make routine updates to the Website without prior reference to Council.

The Clerk will be fully responsible for all Facebook comments and will ensure that such platforms are regularly updated.

Reviewed May 2024
Next review May 2025

If at any time the Council feels that information on the website or social media is inappropriate, then the Clerk will amend or take down immediately.

Communications with Parish Council Staff

Councillors must not give instructions to any member of staff, unless authorised to do so (for example, a committee with appropriate delegated powers from the council).

No individual Councillor, regardless of whether or not they are the Chairman of the Council, the Chairman of a committee, working party 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.

E-mails

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; e-mails from Councillors to external parties should be copied to the Clerk; Councillors should acknowledge their e-mails when requested to do so.

Telephone calls

All calls to the Council must be made to the designated mobile telephone 077464 429630 which is held by the Clerk. The Clerk will endeavour to answer calls during her working hours and there is a voicemail facility for messages to be left. Instant replies should not be expected and any reasons of urgency should be stated. For transparency and audit trail purposes please keep telephone calls to a minimum.