



# Wellingborough Town Council

## COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

### 1. Policy

The Town Council is apolitical; posting party political material is a misuse of the Town Council's website and social media platforms. In the six-week run up to an election - local, general or European – the council must be very careful not to do or say anything that could be seen in any way to support any political party or candidate. We will continue to publish important service announcements using social media but may have to remove responses if they are overtly party political.

It is the duty of the Town Clerk to keep all councillors fully informed about communications from the public, North Northamptonshire Council and other authorities and agencies.

The Town Clerk as the Proper Officer shall be responsible for all communication on behalf of the Council.

### Town Clerk responsibilities

- The point of contact for the Town Council is the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk should deal with all correspondence as directed by council following a meeting.
- Town Clerk as the Head of Paid Service shall act as the most senior officer of the Council in relation to all employment matters. The Clerk is responsible for exercising and implementing the policies of the Council in respect of the following functions: human resources, external communications, and strategic development relationships with other bodies and organisations where not service specific.
- The Town Clerk is responsible for monitoring the content posted on all official Town Council social media pages including Councillors own posts.

- The Town Clerk has the authority to remove any posts made by third parties from said social media pages which are deemed to be of a defamatory, libel nature.
- Communications by officers must be acknowledged within three working days. A full reply must be sent within a maximum of ten working days, or a communication sent explaining why this is not possible. If a communication for individual councillors is received by officer, councillors should be informed within a one working day.
- Press reports and comments from the council and committees should be issued by the Town Clerk.
- Communications from the Town Council on social media will meet the following criteria:
  1. Be moderated by officers only;
  2. Never make false or misleading statements;
  3. Not post images that include young people without parental permission;
  4. Ensure that security settings are in place;
  5. Respect the privacy of other councillors, officers and residents;
  6. Always remember to spell and grammar check;

### **Councillor responsibilities**

Councillors, including the Chairman must not give instructions to any officer. Telephone calls and other communication should be:

1. Kept to a minimum.
  2. Appropriate to the work of the Town Council.
- All personal correspondence from a councillor to other agencies should make it clear that the views are the expression of the personal opinions of the writer and not necessarily those of the Town Council unless council has agreed otherwise.
  - It would be good practice if a copy of all outgoing correspondence from councillors relating to the Town Council or one's role within it should be sent to the Town Clerk.
  - Reports from councillors attending outside bodies should be provided to the Town Clerk to be circulated on regular basis to keep councillors informed of local issues. Where decisions are required by councillors on outside bodies these should be put on a suitable agenda.
  - Councillors who are asked for comment by the press or councillors of the public should ask that it be clearly reported as their personal view, or ask direct them to the Town Clerk to comment on behalf of the Council.

- If Councillors have a complaint or receive a complaint about the council, this should be presented to the Town Clerk in written format, to be dealt with under the complaint's procedure. An e-mail to an officer counts as written for this purpose.
- Meetings between councillors and the Town Clerk or other officers should be relevant to the work of the Council, be clear about the matters they wish to discuss and where possible an appointment should be made but officer should acknowledge that the function of the council is to serve the public.
- 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.

When participating in any online communication, including social media:

1. Never make false or misleading statements
2. Make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council
3. Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks
4. Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications
5. Never use an individual's name, unless you have written permission to do so
6. Permission to publish photographs or videos on social media sites should be sought from the persons or organisations in the video or photograph before being uploaded
7. Respect the privacy of other councillors and residents