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**COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL**  
**OF**  
**ALBRIGHTON PARISH COUNCIL**

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## Document Control

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V2	23/4/24		Amendment to 6.2 be amended to remove the phrase “..and chair of the relevant committee..” to make plain that the Council Chairman has full authority on the release of public publication.	Olivia Neal	Office Administrator

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this protocol is to define the roles and responsibilities within Albrighton Parish Council regarding communication and provide guidelines.
- 1.2 The Parish Council articulates and represents the views and needs of the local community. It provides information on important parish matters affecting the community and encourages comment from interested individuals and groups.
- 1.3 The overall aim is to make Council communications a two-way process: to give people the information to understand accurately what services Albrighton Parish Council provide to the community, whilst also enabling the Council to make informed decisions using information received from residents and partners.
- 1.4 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 ensure efficient and effective communications between council members and with third parties.
- 1.5 Separate policies for Social Media Policy and Code of Conduct of Members exists, and should be considered in conjunction with this policy.
- 1.6 The principles of these guidelines apply to Parish Councillors, the Clerk to the Council and all Albrighton Parish Council staff and volunteers. It is also intended for guidance for others communicating with the Parish Council.

## **2. IMPORTANCE OF GOOD COMMUNICATION**

Good communication will enable Albrighton Parish Council to:

- Better understand the needs of the community and develop appropriate strategies and priorities.
- Raise residents' satisfaction, trust and confidence by communicating about issues, services and opportunities in the parish, the district and the region.
- Be an effective voice for the community.
- Maintain and enhance the reputation of Albrighton Parish Council.
- Proactively challenge inaccuracies and misrepresentations that might undermine the brand image or integrity of Albrighton Parish Council or the parish.

## **3. PARISH COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE**

- 3.1 The Proper Officer, in this instance the Clerk, has overall responsibility for overseeing all communication with members of the community and outside bodies.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 The Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting.
- 3.4 No individual Councillor or Officer should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the parish council, a committee or working group.

- 3.5 In particular, Councillors and officers do not have a right to obtain confidential information/documentation unless they can demonstrate a 'need to know'
- 3.6 Most official correspondence should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the Council using council letterhead.
- 3.7 For any correspondence not sent by the Clerk, the Clerk must be provided with a copy.
- 3.8 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 [name] ).
- 3.9 Council letterhead must only be used to convey information that has been authorised by Albrighton Parish Council and must not be used to convey personal views.
- 3.10 Council letterhead is used by the Clerk and authorised staff in the day to day running of the parish council and its interests.

#### **4. AGENDA ITEMS FOR COUNCIL, COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUP MEETINGS**

- 4.1 Agendas will be clear and concise. They will contain sufficient information to enable Councillors to make an informed decision, and for members of the public to understand what matters are being considered and what decisions are to be taken at a meeting.
- 4.2 Items for information should be kept to a minimum on an agenda and the Town Clerk will use their discretion over whether to circulate hard copies of documents etc. which are for information only. Copies of documents referred to on agendas, when not circulated in advance or a meeting, will be available for viewing in the Council Office prior to a meeting
- 4.3 Where the Clerk or a Councillor wishes fellow Councillors to receive matters for 'information only', this information will be circulated via the Clerk.

#### **5. PUBLIC NOTICEBOARDS**

- 5.1 All Council notices to be agreed by the Parish Clerk or Parish Council Office staff (in conjunction with the Parish Clerk) prior to being posted in public noticeboards (either the Council noticeboard or public noticeboard owned by the Council).
- 5.2 All public requests for notices to be posted in Council owned noticeboards to be agreed by the Parish Clerk or Parish Council Office staff to being posted.
- 5.3 All public notices should be for charitable, social, or non-profit purposes. The Parish Council will not publish business flyers.
- 5.4 Any notices shall be removed by Parish Council staff without reference to the external body if they do not comply with the above, have passed their event period or if the noticeboards are otherwise required for Council business.
- 5.5 All keys for the Council owned noticeboards shall be retained and managed by the Council Office.

## **6. COMMUNICATIONS WITH PRESS AND PUBLIC**

- 6.1 The Parish Clerk will be responsible for all press reports or comments to the media on behalf of the Council.
- 6.2 The Parish Clerk will clear all press reports or comments to the media with the Chairman of the Council before conducting them.
- 6.3 The Parish Council Office staff may issue written Press Releases to the public and the community, with prior agreement from the Parish Clerk.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 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.
- 6.6 Unless a Councillor is certain they are reporting the view of the Council, they must make it clear to members of the public that they are expressing their personal view.
- 6.7 If Councillors receive a complaint from a member of the public, this should be dealt with under the Council's adopted complaints procedure.
- 6.8 Confidential matters such as employment and staff matters, including items discussed at meetings where the press and public have been excluded, must not be divulged to public or press following the meeting or confidential disclosure.
- 6.9 All Councillors should make themselves aware of the Data Protection Act and GDPR and how it affects them in their role as Councillors. Councillors and Officers will be made aware of any other relevant information as and when it becomes available.
- 6.10 Volunteers, organisations or such who are working in partnership with the Parish Council cannot go to the press as an individual in relation to any project, partnership or work conducted without prior agreement from the Parish Clerk and the relevant Committee or Council.
- 6.11 Should volunteers, organisations or such who are working in partnership with the Parish Council go to the press without prior agreement, they may be asked to disband from the partnership with immediate effect.
- 6.12 Standing Orders states the Chairman may ask a Councillor or the Parish Clerk to respond to a member of the public during the public session. Where this happens, the Councillor or the Parish Clerk should ensure that the answer that they give reflects the view or policy of Albrighton Parish Council on the matter raised.
- 6.13 The Parish Clerk, if appropriate, can give an update on progress of a matter of public importance.

## **7. COUNCILLOR CORRESPONDENCE TO EXTERNAL PARTIES**

- 7.1 Most communications will be made through the Parish Clerk. However, any correspondence from a Councillor to other bodies needs to make clear that it is written in their official capacity, and has been authorised by the Council.
- 7.2 A copy of all outgoing correspondence relating to the Council or a Councillor's role within it should be sent to the Clerk, and be noted on the correspondence, e.g. "copy to the Clerk" so that the recipient is aware that the Clerk has been advised.

## **8. COUNCILLOR COMMUNICATIONS WITH PARISH COUNCIL STAFF**

- 8.1 Councillors must not give instructions to any member of staff.
- 8.2 No individual Councillor, regardless of whether or not they are the Chairman of the Council, the Chairman of a Committee or Working Group, may give instructions to the Clerk or another employee, which are inconsistent or conflict with council decisions or arrangements for delegated power.
- 8.3 Telephone calls to and from the Parish Clerk, Parish Council staff and Councillors should be appropriate to the work of the Parish Council.

## **9. COUNCILLOR EMAILS TO PARISH COUNCIL STAFF**

- 9.1 Instant replies should not be expected from the Clerk or any Parish Council staff member. Any reason for urgency should be stated
- 9.2 Information to Councillors should normally be copied to the Parish Clerk
- 9.3 Emails from Councillors to external parties should be copied to the Clerk
- 9.4 Where emails are received by Councillors from external parties they should be acknowledged by return and copied to the Parish Clerk for appropriate action.
- 9.5 Councillors should acknowledge their emails when requested to do so.

## **10. COUNCILLOR MEETINGS PARISH COUNCIL STAFF**

- 10.1 Wherever possible an appointment should be made in advance.
- 10.2 Meetings should be relevant to the work of that particular staff member.
- 10.3 Councillors should be clear that the matter is legitimate council business and not matters driven by personal or political agendas.