



COMMUNICATIONS POLICY – SEDGEBROOK PARISH COUNCIL – 23 JULY 2021 – Reviewed 13 July 2023 and 18 July 2024

This Policy is designed to assist Parish Councillors and staff to effectively communicate with the general public.

Objective

To provide a helpful response to telephone, or written enquiries in an efficient and polite manner.

Personal Contact

This can be in person or by telephone.

If it relates to a Parish Council service, then the caller will be dealt with by the the Clerk.

If it relates to a County Council or District Council service the caller will be advised to contact the County Council or District Council by providing them with the following appropriate number/email:

☐ Lincolnshire County Council – 01522 552 222
customer_services@lincolnshire.gov.uk

☐ South Kesteven District Council – 01476 406080
customerservices@southkesteven.gov.uk

Parish Councillors and the Clerk are advised against acting as an intermediary with the County Council and District Council Contact Centres; this is not being unhelpful, but to aid the trained staff of the County and District Council and /or their trained call centre staff to direct enquiries to the appropriate department or other public service. No direct dial numbers are to be given for any officer(s) at either the County or District Council.

Written Enquiries

These could be by letter or, more frequently, by email. Wherever possible a detailed reply should be given within 5 working days. If that is not possible, a holding response should be sent within 5 days.

There is no need to respond to unsolicited invitations or spam emails, indeed there are very good reasons for not so doing.

Inevitably, the Parish Council may receive repeated communications from individual members of the public on the same subject(s). It is permissible for the Clerk to merely acknowledge such emails/letters without having to respond to each point. In any such case, the Chairman should be consulted.

It should always be remembered that it is possible to recover any electronic correspondence.

Parish Councillor's Details

If requested, the Clerk will provide a member of the public with the names, addresses and telephone numbers for Parish Councillors.

Media Statements

Any press release from the Parish Council is to be approved by the Chairman and, where requested, copied to all Parish Councillors.

Press releases from the Parish Council need not be formally worded in stilted language but must not be partisan.

For the avoidance of doubt, an individual Parish Councillor or political party may issue their own statements to the media but those must not give the impression of being a release from the Parish Council.

Purdah

Purdah is the period prior to an election once a notice of poll has been officially given by the Returning Officer. It applies to Town and County Council elections as well as other national elections (e.g. a General Election).

It also applies if there is a local by-election.

During such a period, special care is needed to avoid any impression that the Parish Council, as a body, supports any aspirant for elected office or a particular party.

More specific advice will be issued by the NALC and/or the Returning Officer at the County/District Council. A separate policy statement in respect of the 'purdah' period is available from the Parish Clerk.

Obscene & Abusive Language

The Clerk and Councillors are not obliged to listen to abusive and obscene tirades or address members of the public in this way. In such a case the caller should politely be asked to desist and advised that if they continue to use such language the call will be terminated. If the abuse or obscenity continues, then the call can be terminated.

Care, however, should be taken as some "vivid descriptions" are used in the ordinary course of speech by certain sections of the community. A Judgement should be made from the tone if that is the position. In such cases a Councillor or Clerk can ask for moderation but may choose to continue the contact.

This policy was agreed by Sedgebrook Parish Council on the 22 July 2021. Reviewed 13 July 2023 and 18 July 2024.