

Colburn Town Council

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

This policy sets out to define the roles and responsibilities within the Council regarding communications and guidance on how the Council conducts business.

Emails

Emails are the usual method and when received by the Council Office or Members may be disclosed following a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, a subject access request under the Data Protection Act 1998 or in the course of legal proceedings.

All emails should be sent to the Council's email address as the Clerk is the point of contact and will take matters forward.

All correspondence and information are collectively owned by the Town Council and can be used at full Council meetings and committee or working party meetings. Confidential documentation must be respected and effectively disposed of after meetings.

Key Points

When writing any communication it should be assumed that it may have to be disclosed to a court, tribunal or to the Information Commission.

Any communication should be relevant and concise. Copies will only be sent to essential participants in the discussion and BCC used and not CC for security.

The privacy of all must be respected so emails containing private addresses will not be forwarded. Emails are kept for a maximum of 6 months and then deleted from the Council's mail account.

If Individual members wish to sign a communication as a councillor they may do so but it must be clear that the contents are their own opinions and not the policy of the Town Council. Decisions made at a Council meeting which are minuted are communicated by the clerk in a written email to the parties concerned.

Agenda items for Council, Committees, Sub-Committees & Working Groups

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 will be taken at a meeting. All financial decisions must be shown as an agenda item.

Items for information are not a formal part of the agenda and decisions cannot be made on any points raised. It is useful to publicise upcoming social events, request a formal item at the next agenda or request a working group meeting to discuss a new idea.

Residents' questions

Councillors will be regularly phoned, emailed or spoken to in person by residents and a list of councillors and their contact details is displayed in the noticeboards.

Councillors should not make any promises to the public other than to say they will investigate the matter. They can then refer the matter to the Clerk who will advise on the next step and whether an agenda item is necessary to answer the concerns/complaint. Councillors should not communicate with the public expressing views that do not reflect the decision and policies of the Council.

Residents can use the website form for questions and reporting issues of dog bins, signage, ASB etc. Broken street lights, potholes, blocked drains can all be reported by residents on the NYCC ReportIT facility.

Media matters

The Council may issue an agreed Press Release on an important issue and has a nominated councillor to deal directly with the Press. Individual councillors who express views must make it clear that the views are personal and not representative of Council policy.

Standing Orders

The approved Council Standing Orders contain more detail on points above.

Any communication by the Clerk's Office or individual Councillors should have regard for the long-term reputation of the Council and enhance its standing in the wider community.