**Guidance on email etiquette**

Emails are a form of formal communication and are subject to the laws covering written communications. We write and receive lots of emails these days and the sheer volume and speed of email communication can make us more prone to mistakes, which can sometimes be embarrassing. These are some guidance points to consider when you send emails on Parish Council business.

**Points Relating to All Email Communications**

1. Include a clear, direct description in the Subject line, changing it if you are raising a different point from a previous exchange of emails.
2. Take time to check and proof read your email before sending it. Make sure the correct recipient/s are in the “To” and “Copy” lines.
3. Use proper greetings at the start and end of the email; for instance, “Dear x” or “Dear all” and “With good wishes”, etc. Try to use an appropriate level of formality in the email.
4. Avoid hitting “reply all” unless necessary, as this clogs up other people’s inboxes.
5. Do not flag emails as “urgent” unless it is necessary.
6. In practice email communication are more informal than letters. One example is the greater use of capitals for words, emboldening, italics and text in red – it can look very aggressive and rather like shouting, particularly when the elements are combined. As a matter of good practice, it’s best to avoid the use of capitals, exclamation points and slang; only to use italics and emboldening to emphasise a specific point; and only to use coloured type to compare specific texts.
7. Take care with the tone you use. Be cautious with humour, irony, or sarcasm and avoid using slang or emoticons. Emails, which may be examined in future, for instance in court or tribunal proceedings or in response to a Freedom of Information request, should not contain unsupported assertions, aggressive or rude language.To avoid misunderstandings, re-read and think about your message before sending it. Do not send emails when you are angry, upset, tired or emotional. If you are feeling angry or upset, draft the message but do not send it. Re-read it later, when you are feeling more calm.
8. Try to acknowledge emails in a timely manner even if you cannot respond immediately.
9. It is appropriate courtesy to allow Councillors to send emails when it is convenient to them; it is a reciprocal courtesy to allow them to respond in due course when it is convenient to them, subject only to any need for urgency, for instance in relation to a deadline. Increasing patterns of home-working, portfolio careers, work patterns and voluntary work mean that people may send and respond to emails at any time and it is right that they are able to do so. However, It is unreasonable to expect an immediate response or to assume that it has to be provided.

**Points Relating to Email Communication with the Clerk**

1. Councillors and the Clerk should treat each other with respect in all exchanges and communications and should avoid, if possible, lengthy and argumentative exchanges.
2. The Clerk is the servant of the Council and should always treat Councillors with respect, take careful note of any matters raised, and respond in a considered, professional, timely and courteous manner, consistent with 12 below.
3. Councillors are in a position of power in relation to the Clerk’s employment. Councillors should recognise that the Clerk has established working hours, holiday arrangements, and sometimes may have sickness or bereavement leave. Appropriate arrangements should be made to deal with urgent business when the Clerk is not available. They should not expect or be expected to respond outside the terms of their contract of employment and associated policies including grievance and disciplinary procedures.
4. It is reasonable for Councillors to request information about the work and policies of the Council and the Clerk’s advice. However, they should not, through emails or otherwise, make inappropriate demands on staff in terms of content or urgency. Formal advice, including that provided in emails, should always be given in writing, quoting any relevant legislation, other authority or established policies and should be further explained if requested.
5. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council are responsible for overseeing the operation of this policy and addressing any problems that might arise or be drawn to their attention.

Policy Agreed: 22 November 2022

Next Review Date: November 2024