

Lyng Parish Council

Communications Procedure

Correspondence/Information to the Parish Council.

- The point of contact for the Parish Council is the clerk and it is the clerk that all correspondence for the Parish council should be addressed.
- The Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting.
- No individual Councillor should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the Parish Council, committee, sub committee or working party.

Agenda Items for Council, committees and working parties.

- Agenda items should be clear and concise. They should contain sufficient information for members to make an informed decision.
- Items for information should be kept at a minimum on council agendas.
- Where members wish fellow members to receive matters for 'information only' this information should be circulated via the Parish Clerk.

Communications with the Press and Public.

- Press reports from the Parish Council, Committees and working parties etc should be from the Clerk or an officer or via the reporter's own attendance at a meeting.
- Members who are asked for comment by the press or members of the public, should ask that it be clearly reported that it is a personal view. Unless you are absolutely certain that you are reporting the view of the Parish council, make it clear to the members of the public that it is a personal view.
- If members have a complaint or receive a complaint from a members of the public, this should be presented to the Clerk in written form, to be dealt with under the complaints procedure or via a Parish Council agenda item. The person's name and address should be on record.

Councillor correspondence to Other Agencies

- All personal correspondence as a Parish Councillor to other agencies should make it clear that the views are the expression of the personal opinions of the writer and not necessarily of the Parish Council.
- A copy of all outgoing correspondence relating to the Parish council or one's role within it should be sent to the Clerk and it is noted on the correspondence e.g. "copy to the Clerk" so that the recipient is aware that the Clerk has been advised.

Communications with the Clerk.

- Councillors must not give instructions to the clerk unless authorised to do so by 2 or more other members of the council.
- Telephone calls should be –
kept to a minimum,
appropriate to the work as a Parish council.

- Emails should be-
kept to a minimum,
instant replies should not be expected from the Clerk, reasons for urgency should be stated.
matters for information to the other councillors should normally be directed via the Clerk.
Emails to other agencies, after agreement from councillors, should be copied to the Clerk.
- Councillors should acknowledge their emails when requested to do so.
- The Parish Council will set up a dedicated email address for correspondence. The address will be monitored by the clerk during the working week.
- There will be a direct link to this email address from the Parish Council website.
- Emails will be acknowledged within 5 working days.
- Where possible a substantive answer will be provided in answer to correspondence 7 days following the meeting or earlier if feasible. If it is not possible to answer within this time period, the individual will be informed why this is the case.

Meetings with the Clerk or other Parish Councillors –

- Where possible an appointment should be made
- Meetings should be relevant to Parish Council matters
- Members should be clear about the matters they wish to discuss

Vexatious conduct and communication

- The Parish council's adopted definition of vexatious correspondence is "correspondence that is, by nature, manifestly unjustified, inappropriate or improper" (adapted from the ICO. Dealing with vexatious requests, section 14, page 6. FOI. Also page 7. Indicators -Abusive or aggressive language. Burden on the authority. Personal grudges. Unreasonable persistence.)
- The Clerk will use the indicators found in the ICO document on pages 7 and 8 as a point of reference when considering email traffic that is potentially vexatious and take into account any legal or statutory obligations placed on the Council to respond.
- If an individual or group is determined by the clerk to have requested information vexatiously, then the Clerk shall issue the individual with a formal refusal notice in line with the Freedom of Information Act.
- If an individual or group continues to engage with the council on matters where the Clerk has already indicated they are acting vexatiously or is repeatedly raising a range of issues with the council that appear to have no serious purpose or value, then the Clerk may refer the matter to the next Parish Council meeting. The Parish Council can then determine whether any additional measures can and should be taken.