



Communications Policy

Introduction

This Communications Policy applies to every Member and Staff member of the Parish Council. Its aim is to provide clear guidelines for managing communications—internally, with the media, the public, and among each other—while ensuring all messaging remains accurate and professional.

Council Commitment

The Parish Council is dedicated to offering timely, precise information about its functions, decisions, and actions. Every communication must be clear, respectful, and comply with relevant laws.

Legal Framework

This policy is enforced through the following legislation:

- The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960
- The Local Government Acts 1972 and 1986
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Data Protection Act 1998 (with GDPR updates)
- The Council's Standing Orders

General Communication Guidelines

- Council decisions at meeting and communications requiring clarity are to be recorded in writing and those minutes formally approved.
- Anonymous correspondence will not receive acknowledgment or responses.

- To reduce the risk of miscommunication, significant communications should receive written approval.
- Debates, discussions, or decisions must occur at Council meetings in public, or, when delegated to sub-committees or working groups, be reported to the Council, unless prohibited by GDPR.
- Discussions held in closed meetings due to GDPR concerns (or confidential Staffing matters and legal or procurement issues) will have their outcomes minuted and reported publicly, in compliance with data privacy requirements.

Official Communications

- All official statements must reflect the Council's position. Members and staff should not misrepresent Council views or present personal opinions as official commentary.
- Anyone authorised to speak for the Council must identify their role and authority, signing as "on behalf of Aston Rowant Parish Council."

Personal Communications

- Councillors and staff are not to use their official titles in personal correspondence.
- Personal views about Council business should not be publicly expressed in ways that could conflict with or misrepresent Council positions.
- Councillors should clarify whether they are communicating as a councillor or in a personal capacity to avoid misunderstandings.

Internal Communication

- All communications within the Council are subject to Freedom of Information (FOI) and must adhere to the Council Code of Conduct.
- Internal messages are for sharing information or logistics and should not include debates, discussions, or decisions.
- No communication outside formal meetings should lead to a Council decision; such decisions must be made in public meetings unless delegated.
- Any gathering of Councillors outside a formal meeting should be reported at the next Council meeting.

Communication with the Public

- The Parish Council values open, courteous, and prompt responses to the public's enquiries.
- All official interactions with the public must be professional, factual, and clear.
- Councillors and staff should communicate only the agreed Council position and avoid sharing personal views or speculating.
- Major communications with the public should be documented in writing and formally approved by the Council.
- When participating in informal community events, Councillors must not speak on behalf of the Council or commit it to action without proper authority; only Council meetings can authorise actions.
- Anonymous inquiries or correspondence will not be acknowledged or receive a response (ie: via website or Social Media) except in exceptional cases approved by the Clerk.

Communication with the Media

- The Clerk serves as the main contact for media inquiries, interviews, statements, or articles. If the Clerk is unavailable, the Chair or Vice-Chair should be contacted instead.
- Only the Clerk, or another who is expressly authorised by Council resolution, may communicate on behalf of the Council to the media.
- Any media communication must reflect the Council's official positions.
- If Councillors or staff speak with the media privately, they must not use Council titles and must clarify that they are not representing the Council.

Written Communication (Including Emails)

- All Council business should be conducted using official Council email addresses to ensure transparency and compliance with FOI laws; personal emails should not be used for Council matters and may be subjected to legal review.
- Councillors must communicate respectfully and adhere to the Code of Conduct in all written correspondence.
- Council business discussions should occur in public meetings, except where Standing Orders permit email discussions, such as for planning matters.
- Confidentiality and GDPR requirements must always be maintained.

Other Communication Channels (Phone, Text, Online)

- Councillors and staff may use various means to handle logistical matters, but all forms of official communication are subject to Freedom of Information (FOI).
- Any meeting of Councillors must be noted at the next Council meeting.

Social Media and Online Platforms

- The Clerk manages the Council's official website and social media, ensuring legal and professional compliance.
- Council social media accounts share factual, current information, and responses are monitored or removed if inappropriate.
- Councillors and staff can use personal online accounts but must not imply Council representation or use official titles in personal posts.

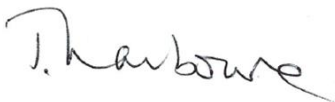
Handling Persistent Correspondence (Individuals and Groups)

- The Council may restrict responses to repeated or vexatious correspondence, especially if it becomes abusive or burdens resources.
- Any decision to limit correspondence must be formally resolved, with individuals informed and given a right to appeal.
- Correspondence from groups without clear official representation (such as unsigned messages) may not be acknowledged.
- Groups will be notified if the Council elects to stop further correspondence.

Policy Adopted Date: 10 September 2025 (Minute 11)

Policy Review Date: September 2027

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Harbour". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Role: Clerk