


# FILKINS & BROUGHTON POGGS PARISH COUNCIL

## Correspondence Policy

<b>Adopted Date</b>	November 2023
<b>Review Date</b>	November 2025
<b>Chairman Signature</b>	

## Correspondence Policy

### 1. Introduction

1.1 This communications policy applies to Filkins and Broughton Poggs Parish Council Clerk and Members. The purpose of this policy is to offer clear guidance on how to deal with communication.

1.2 The policy will be published on the website so that those writing to the Council know how their correspondence will be dealt with. The point of contact for the Parish Council is the Clerk, and it is to the Clerk that all official correspondence for the Parish Council should be addressed. It is the Clerks responsibility to forward all relevant correspondence to the Council. The Clerk will make a professional decision not to circulate some items of correspondence such as marketing items or emails which require re-direction to other bodies. Correspondence from individual Parish Councillors should be avoided, except in exceptional circumstances.

1.3 Any correspondence addressed to the Parish Council will not be considered confidential unless clearly marked so or of a personal nature and will be considered to be 'in the public domain'. The Clerk will have discretion on how to deal with correspondence labelled confidential.

1.4 Any correspondence received is in the public domain, therefore, in accordance with GDPR, details will be kept by the Parish Council.

### 2. Procedure for Consideration of Correspondence at Meetings

2.1 Appropriate correspondence received prior to the agenda deadline (seven days prior to the Parish Council Meeting) will be presented to the Council with the Agenda and paperwork for the meeting if deemed appropriate by the Clerk.

2.2 Any correspondence received after that date, unless of an absolute urgent nature or planning, licensing or tree works, cannot be included on the agenda and will be considered the following month.

2.3 Councillors must make it known to the Clerk or Chairman if they particularly want an item of correspondence that does not demand a response to be discussed on the agenda prior to the deadline, otherwise it will be at the discretion of the Chair as to whether it goes on the agenda.

### 3. Written, Verbal or Interview Communication Protocol for Officers and Members

3.1 The Chair or in his/her absence Vice Chair will be the public representative of the Council with a role of promoting the work of the Council and its policies. The Chair will respond to external events and media enquiries where the policy of the Council is clear. Any activity will be copied to the Clerk and will be recorded as media activities on the Clerks report.

3.2 Where another member is **authorised (at a meeting)** to communicate on behalf of the Parish Council, they must make it clear that they are acting on behalf of the Parish Council and may sign off the communication "on behalf of Filkins and Broughton Poggs Parish Council". Councillors are not permitted to misrepresent the position and views of the Parish Council. Unless a Councillor is **absolutely certain** that he/she is reporting the view of the council, they must make it clear to members of the public that they are expressing a personal view.

3.3 Any correspondence deemed abusive will not be responded to.

3.4 As all Councillors have been appointed on a non-party political basis the title of Councillor should not be used by any member to support publicly a particular political party.

3.5 If Councillors engage in correspondence as a representative of the Parish Council, they **must at all times** copy the Clerk into that correspondence and it should be noted on the correspondence “copy to the Clerk” so the recipient is aware the Clerk has been copied. **No individual Councillor should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the Parish Council.**

3.6 Should correspondence relate to a working group the whole group and the Clerk should be copied in to avoid duplication

3.7 If Councillors receive a complaint from a member of the public, this should be immediately referred to the Clerk.

#### **4 Communication by Email**

4.1 Councillors must ensure that any communication follows the principles set out in the Code of Conduct in particular to show respect to others. Councillors and the Clerk must take care to ensure that confidential information is not disclosed so as to place the Council at risk of breach of confidentiality.

4.2 Councillors may discuss Council business via email and must be mindful communications are in the public domain unless marked otherwise. Councillors are free to obtain information and exchange views in respect of a particular issue, provided that they do not use improper influence to affect the outcome of a decision. **However, for transparency the Clerk must always be copied on internal emails.**

4.3 This sort of pre-meeting activity is not a substitute for considering a matter at a formal meeting

4.4 All Councillors will be furnished with a dedicated email address for Parish Council business. This **MUST** be used at all times for Council communication. All Council correspondence is to be kept on their server and is not for public distribution. When a Councillor leaves this email will become the property of the Council and the Clerk will take control of any correspondence. Private emails are **NOT under any circumstances** to be used for Council business for transparency. The Council will not support any information sent from private email addresses.

4.5 All communications must be open to the Council to ensure there are no misunderstandings when communicating with each other and the public. To this end the Clerk will copy any emails as stated above to the Chair.

4.6 Councillors should acknowledge their emails when requested to do so.