



## **ST AUSTELL TOWN COUNCIL**

### **COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL**

#### **A Town Council Correspondence**

- (i) The point of contact for the Town Council is the Clerk, and it is to the Clerk that all correspondence for the Town Council should be addressed.
- (ii) The Clerk should deal with all correspondence required following a meeting.
- (iii) No individual Councillor or Officer should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the Town Council, a committee, sub-committee or working party. Councillors and Officers shall have the right to obtain confidential information/documentation if they can demonstrate a 'need to know'.
- (iv) All official correspondence should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the council using council letter headed paper or official e-mail.
- (v) Where correspondence including e-mails from the Clerk to a Councillor, a Councillor to the Clerk or between Councillors is copied to another person, the addressee must be made aware that a copy is being forwarded to that other person.

#### **B. Agenda Items for Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Parties**

- (i) 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 are being taken at a meeting.
- (ii) Items for information should be kept to a minimum on an agenda.
- (iii) Where the Clerk or a Councillor wishes all fellow Councillors to receive matters for "information only", this information will be circulated via the Clerk.

#### **C. Communications with the Press and Public**

- (i) The Clerk will clear all non-technical press reports, or

comments to the media, with the Mayor or the Chair of the relevant committee.

- (ii) The Mayor in agreement with the Clerk may issue press releases on behalf of the Council.
- (iii) Press reports from the council, its committee or working parties should be from the Clerk, an officer, the Mayor or via the reporter's own attendance at a meeting.
- (iv) Press releases issued on behalf of the Town Council should be sent to all Members for their information at the same time that the press release is issued to the media.
- (v) Unless a Councillor has been authorised by the council to speak to the media on a particular issue, Councillors who are asked for comment by the press should make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as their personal view.
- (vi) 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.
- (vii) If Councillors receive a complaint about the Council, a Councillor or its officers from a member of the public, this should be dealt with under the Council's adopted complaints procedure, or via a council agenda item.
- (viii) The Clerk should maintain the Town Council's website in an accessible, timely manner and ensure that all statutory requirements for the publication of information are met.
- (ix) The Clerk should maintain and monitor an up to date and informative Facebook page on behalf of the Council, taking care to ensure no political bias.

#### **D. Councillor Correspondence to external parties**

- (i) The Clerk should send the majority of correspondence to external bodies. Should a Councillor send any correspondence to an external body, they should make it clear that they are either writing in a personal capacity or because of their role in that external body and, if appropriate, should ensure that they have the authorisation of the Town Council to do so.
- (ii) A copy of outgoing correspondence relating to the council,

council business or a Councillor's role within it where relevant, should be sent to the Clerk, and it be noted on the correspondence, e.g. "copy to Clerk" so that the recipient is aware that the Clerk has been advised.

- (iii) Members are free to engage with residents on local issues or make general comments on council business and reply accordingly.
- (iv) If Members participate in social networking sites (whether in a personal capacity or in their role as a Town Councillor) they should make it clear in their communications, where appropriate, whether they are speaking on behalf of the Council or in a personal capacity.

#### **E. Communications with Town Council Staff**

- (i) Councillors must not give instructions to any member of staff, unless authorised to do so (for example, three or more Councillors sitting as a committee or sub-committee with appropriate delegated powers from the council).
- (ii) No individual Councillor, regardless of whether or not they are the Chair of the council, the Chair of a committee or a working group may give instructions to the Clerk or to another employee which are inconsistent or conflict with council decisions or arrangements for delegated power.
- (iii) Telephone calls to the office should be appropriate to the work of the Town Council.
- (iv) E-mails:
  - Instant replies should not be expected from the Clerk (reasons for urgency should be stated);
  - Information to Councillors should normally be directed via the Clerk;
  - E-mails from Councillors to external parties where relevant should be copied to the Clerk;
  - Councillors should acknowledge their e-mails when requested to do so.
- (v) Meetings with the Clerk or other officers:
  - Wherever possible an appointment should be made;
  - Meetings should be relevant to the work of that particular officer;
  - Councillors should be clear that all matters are legitimate council business.