



Protocol for Communications

Re-adopted 13th May 2024 – Minute no 0205/24

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Crich Parish Council ('the Council') aim to give local people a voice and where possible to promote and represent the interests of the Parish to improve the quality of life in our local community. The Council is accountable to the electorate and has a duty to convey its decisions and actions through various media.

This policy looks to establish a protocol for effective communication of the Council's activities and to facilitate efficient distribution of information to the media and members of the public. It does not seek to cover inbound communication.

The aim of this policy is to ensure:

- A consistent approach is adopted and maintained in the use of all communication channels.
- Communications by the council remain open and transparent.
- Increased engagement with individuals and the community regarding the activities of the Council.
- The Council's reputation is upheld and improved, including work to raise the profile of the Parish.
- Councillors and staff understand their obligations in respect of council communications.

The Council is committed to the provision of accurate information in respect of its functions, decisions, and actions. The Council communicates using its website as its primary channel/repository of information.

The Clerk is the Proper Officer of the Council and is responsible for all formal communication between the Council, the press, and members of the public.

The Council will use the following media to communicate its activities:

Activity	Method of Communication	Responsibility
Approved Minutes	Website	Clerk
Agendas	Website/noticeboards	Clerk
Annual Report	Website	Clerk (following approval from Full Council)
Press Release	Website, Local Media, Social Media	Clerk (following approval from Full Council or signed off by Council Chair) Chair or appointed Councillor (with relevant permissions) in regard to social media

Annual External Audit	Website/noticeboards	Clerk
Annual Accounts	Website	Clerk (following approval from Full Council)
Councillor Vacancies	Website/noticeboards	Clerk
Financial statements and other financial information	Website	Clerk
General Information	Website/Noticeboards/Crich Standard/Social Media	Clerk/Chair or appointed Councillor (with relevant permissions) in regard to social media

Guidance for Councillors

The Council encourages Councillors to keep residents and the wider community informed of issues.

However, Councillors should be mindful of the need to ensure information is clearly relayed without bias. The ‘Council’ speaks as a whole, and great care should be taken when expressing personal or ‘Councillor’ views prior to any formal resolution by the Council.

This is to avoid pre-determination on an issue, and can be avoided by making a statement to the effect that:

“I will approach the decision with an open mind and may choose to change my views based upon the information provided.””

Once resolved, the resolution becomes the de jure stated position of the Council. Councillors may continue to make personal statements but should make it clear that they are not speaking on behalf of the council.

Where further information is required or where an issue is uncertain, the matter should be referred to the Clerk for guidance.

Communications from the Council will meet the following criteria:

- Be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- Not contain any personal information;
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

Social Media

The use of social media and electronic communication provides the Council with the opportunity to communicate with people immediately, in real time and in a way which improves further the communications between the Council and residents, businesses

and organisations it works with and serves. However, care needs to be taken that the guidelines above are followed.

When communicating on social media or online generally, it is good practice to provide links to the Council's Website.

Requests for Information

Information held by the Council shall be handled in accordance with the Council's policy in respect of handling requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Data Protection Act 1998 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Correspondence from, and notices served by, the Information Commissioner shall be referred by the Proper Officer to the Council. The Council shall have the power to do anything to facilitate compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Working for the Community

The Council will not disclose confidential information that is exempt under the Freedom of Information Act. The agenda and its supporting papers, and the minutes from a meeting where confidential or sensitive information is discussed, shall not be disclosed

Legal Requirements

The Council complies with the Open and Accountable Government Guidelines (2015). These principles are used as a baseline for the information available. This policy is subject to the Council's statutory obligations set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, The Local Government Act 1972, The Local Government Act 1986, The Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998, the General Data Protection Regulations, and the Council's Standing Orders. The Council, its councillors and staff cannot disclose information which is confidential or where disclosure of information is prohibited by law. Some but not all the relevant obligations that councillors are subject to are contained in the Council's code of conduct, a copy of which is available from the Council.