

# Silverstone Parish Council

## SILVERSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

### Communication and Email Protocol

The purpose of this protocol is to improve communication between members of the council and the clerk as Responsible Officer and make the business of the Council more streamlined and efficient. More and more of council business is done between meetings and is either reported back to the council or is actioned by the clerk on behalf of the council. Often, decisions and actions need to be reviewed or amended between council meetings and, therefore, it is incumbent on fellow councillors to respond in a timely manner to communications from the Clerk.

The Clerk to the Council has a dedicated email address for Council business ([clerk@silverstonevillage.org](mailto:clerk@silverstonevillage.org)) - this should be the primary means of communication to the Clerk. The email account is monitored mainly during office hours, Monday to Thursday, and the clerk aims to respond as soon as is possible or within 2 working days. Instant replies should not be expected from the Clerk: reasons for urgency should be stated. However, an 'out of office' message should be used when the clerk is not available. The Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and passing on relevant information to members or external agencies. The clerk will mark, in the subject line, whether the email is

- **For reading** - this may be important for a future meeting or as information to assist Councillors to make considered contributions
- **For response within 2 working days**
- **For information only**
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As a courtesy to both the Clerk and to other fellow councillors, responses should be within the timeline set out by the clerk and, ideally, copied to all. Should no response be forthcoming within the given framework, the Clerk will make the assumption that councillors are in agreement with the request and suitable action will be taken to complete this action and then report back. Responses do not need to be lengthy - a single word will suffice should a decision need to be made - yes/no; agree/disagree.

Correspondence from the Clerk marked 'Confidential' must be treated as such and not be disclosed to anyone.

Emails from Councillors to external parties should always be copied to the Clerk. Emails will be used to distribute information of council business

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## Parish Council Communication - General

The point of contact for the Parish Council is the Clerk and it is to the Clerk that all correspondence for the Parish Council should be addressed. This correspondence should be appropriate and constructive.

The Clerk will also make sure that Agendas, prepared in consultation with the appropriate Chairs of Committee or Chair of the Council, are distributed at least three clear working days before the meeting in line with legal requirements. Draft and unconfirmed minutes will be verified by the Chair of the meeting before being posted online. These minutes will be confirmed at the next meeting and updated online to replace earlier drafts.

The Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting

No individual Councillor or Officer should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information of the Parish Council, a committee, sub-committee or working party. In particular, Councillors and Officers do not have the right to obtain confidential information/documentation unless they can demonstrate a 'need to know'.

All official correspondence should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the council using council letter headed paper.

Where correspondence from the Clerk to a Councillor is copied to another person, the addressee should be made aware that a copy is being forwarded to that other person (e.g. copy to XX)

Councillors' Communication should be respectful and informative, never condescending or 'loud'. ('Loud' is when, e.g., capital letters are used and coloured font is inserted. Use sentence-case format.) Councillors are reminded to refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks. Language which could be deemed as offensive, especially in respect of race, sexuality, disability, etc, should not be published in any communication. In the main, avoid personal attack and hostile communications. Be aware not to publish anything which violates laws or regulations.

N.B. - any emails copied to the Clerk become official and will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

These procedures will ensure that a complete, accountable and proper record of all correspondence is kept and could be scrutinised, if necessary.

November 2017

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