

SOUTHWATER PARISH COUNCIL

MEMBERS CORRESPONDENCE POLICY



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this guide is to provide Members with information on the action which should be taken to monitor and manage the contact by either staff and the general public.

2. When the Policy Applies

- 2.1. This policy applies to all Parish Council Members and Co-Opted Members.

3. Principles of the Policy

- 3.1 The Parish Council wishes to regulate any communications received and sent by Members or Co-Opted Members of the Parish Council in the usage of e-mail or hard copy correspondence.

4. Procedure

- 4.1 Correspondence between an individual Member and an Officer, particularly when the Member has initiated it, should not normally be copied to any other Member particularly by the recipient without the prior approval of the originator of the correspondence. Where it is necessary to copy the correspondence, this should always be made explicit. Members and Officers are required to comply with the following with regard to correspondence by e-mail.
- 4.2 If using an e-mail address Members are asked to restrict all Council correspondence to one e-mail address retained for purely Council business or use the Council's internal Intranet address.

5. They Should: -

- If offended by the content or tone of an incoming message, get a second opinion to check out their interpretation and made sure the response is objective.
- Comply with the rules of common courtesy and the Law when using e-mail.
- Always use appropriate language, remembering that misunderstandings frequently arise through the use of e-mail, which offend others without intending to.
- Always respect the privacy of others, remembering that e-mail can be just as intrusive as unsolicited telephone calls or letters.
- Respect the confidentiality of information encountered inadvertently in e-mail or other records.

- Use personal and professional courtesy and considerations in e-mail.
- Check with the sender if there is any doubt about the authenticity of a message.

6. They Should Not: -

- Send unnecessary e-mails, remembering someone else will have to read and respond.
- Include anything in an e-mail that would not be put in a letter.
- Use code or jargon which might be misunderstood or unknown to the receiver.
- Use e-mail that breaches codes of common courtesy or decency (such as harassment, discrimination, copyright violations, unsolicited e-mails or other material).
- Seek out, use, or disclose personal or confidential information unless specifically authorized to do so.
- Knowingly restrict or interfere with others' access to and use of e-mail.
- Send "junk e-mail" or chain messages.
- Use e-mail to give the impression that you represent the Parish Council (unless authorized to do so).
- All e-mails must include the Parish Council's standard disclaimer if being sent to a person or body outside of the Parish Council. Each Parish Councillor has been provided with a Parish e-mail, but due to data handling reasons, these e-mails are received by the Parish office. The Executive Officer will verbally contact the Member concerned, and if a response is agreed between the Executive Officer and Member this will be directed from the Parish office. This will ensure that the Member at no time handles such data, nor will the Member record this in any format.

This email may contain privileged and/or confidential information. If you have received this in error, please notify the sender and delete the email immediately. You may not use or pass it to a third party. Whilst every care has been taken to check outgoing emails or viruses etc., it is your responsibility to carry out checks upon receipt of the email. Southwater Parish Council does not accept liability for any damage caused. Email transmission cannot guarantee to be secure or error free. This email does not create any legal relations, contractual or otherwise and any view or opinions expressed are personal to the author and do not necessarily those of Southwater Parish Council. The Council does not accept liability for any unauthorised/unlawful/statement by an employee or group. Information in this email may be subject to public disclosure in accordance with the Law. Southwater Parish Council cannot guarantee that it will not provide this email to a third party. The Council reserves the right to monitor all emails in accordance with the law. If this email, message and or any attachment is incomplete or unreadable, please contact the Parish office on 01403 733202. Any reference to email in this disclaimer includes any attachment or otherwise.

- Official letters sent out on behalf of the Parish Council should normally be sent out under the name of the appropriate Officer, Chairman of Council or Committee Chairman (subject to the matter being within their remit).
- Most letters will be in the name of an Officer because it is Officers who provide advice, implement decisions and deal with day to day operations.
- It may be appropriate in certain circumstances (e.g., representations to a Government Minister) for letters to appear under the name of the Council Chairman.
- Letters or otherwise that create obligations, financial or otherwise, or give instructions on behalf of the Parish Council should never be sent out under the name of a Member.