

## **Dereham Town Council Communications Policy**

### **Introduction:**

Dereham Town Council exists to serve the people of Dereham: Members (Councillors) and Officers (staff) have a joint responsibility to ensure that they work collaboratively to achieve an efficient, transparent and democratic Council. (Member Officer Protocol)

Both Members and Officers should endeavour to ensure that the Council (and each other) is aware of the concerns of the electorate and the community as a whole. This will ensure that effective decision making can be made. (Member Officer Protocol, 2.3)

**Our mission** is to provide a range of local services that are needed within the town and to do this professionally, fairly, efficiently and effectively. To engage with external stakeholders and to represent the views, wishes and aspirations of our town and its people and to advance the cause of our town whenever we can to decision-makers.

In order to do this, we will ensure that our communications are efficient, effective and engaging. We will have an agreed plan for our communications (communications strategy). All communications should uphold our objectives, as they apply at the time.

By collaborating and working together we can showcase how the organisation is working to improve and enhance the town for all our stakeholders.

The Communications policy and communications strategy should be reviewed annually and revised or updated for the next year of operations.

### **Meetings and briefings**

The Council may, in addition to its regular schedule of meetings, organise supplementary meetings, briefings or events and may also attend events organised by others.

Councillors are expected to attend scheduled meetings of the council when summoned. Officers may be asked to attend as required.

All personnel (members and staff) may be asked to assist at supplementary meetings or events outside of the normal schedule of meetings.

The Town Clerk, in consultation with the Mayor, will consider if there are additional requirements for publicity or materials, eg displays, presentations, talks, badges or other materials to be provided by the Council as required.

Councillors attending external meetings may not make decisions on behalf of the council.

### **Public Relations and Press Releases**

The Clerk has overall responsibility for public relations and press releases on behalf of the Council. Publicity must not be issued at the initiative of individual Members or Officers without authorisation.

The Clerk will consult with the Mayor (and where relevant, Committee Chairmen) before issuing an official press release. Both the Mayor and the Committee Chairs can comment directly on behalf of the Council where a quick verbal response is required.

The Clerk, or in his absence, the Deputy Clerk, will co-ordinate all media enquiries into the Town Council office.

Members can communicate with the media in a personal capacity, but they should bear in mind that they are not doing so on behalf of the Council and should not use Council facilities or resources for this purpose.

Members should check with the Town Clerk before commenting directly on Council business or posting about Council matters on social media.

## **Online**

The Council website may be updated by the designated officer following the agreed plan. The Council website is the first source of information for many users and should be kept up to date with positive news stories as well as statutory information.

## **Video**

The Council should review from time to time whether it is desirable to use video to reach a wider or different audience, for example:

- video recordings of meetings
- video recordings of civic events such as the Remembrance Day parade
- short videos to explain some aspect of the Council's work

## **Social media**

Only designated officers may post to the Council's official Facebook page, or any other social media pages. See also the council's social media policy.

## **Correspondence**

The point of contact for the council is the Town Clerk, and it is to the Town Clerk, or the official delegated to the relevant role or task, that all correspondence for the town council should be addressed.

Letters addressed to individual Councillors should be forwarded to the office if an official response is required, rather than a personal reply. Emails requiring an official response should be forwarded to the Town Clerk.

Save in exceptional circumstances, all letters and other communications on official Council business should be sent out only in the name of the Proper Officer (the Clerk), subject to his delegated authority, or in some cases, in the name of the Mayor. Communications which create obligations or give instructions on behalf of the Council should never be sent out under the name of a Member.

Individual Councillors are responsible for their own ward member correspondence. The Town Council does not provide a secretariat for such purpose. Councillors must ensure they make clear where they are informing on official policy and where they are stating their personal views. A copy of all outgoing correspondence, including emails relating to official Council matters, should be sent to the Clerk, or the appropriate designated official and the recipient made aware that the Clerk or designated/delegated official has been advised.

## **Privacy and data protection**

The rules surrounding data protection and the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) are quite complex. All staff and members should familiarise themselves with the Council's Data Protection Policy.

In order to carry out its role effectively, the Council must store data about some of our parishioners and other external contacts. Personal contact details should never be disclosed to another party without the consent of the data subject. Information provided in confidence must not be disclosed to any other party except with the consent of the person concerned in order to provide a solution for them.

There are particular requirements around gaining permissions for use of photographs for publication. Do not publish photographs of individuals without their consent, or, in the case of young people under 16, the consent of their parents or carers.

All communications should be compliant with the relevant data protection legislation.

If in doubt on any of the above, please check with the Town Clerk.