MUDFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Communications Policy

Introduction

Mudford Parish Council (MPC) articulates and represents the views and needs of the local community. It provides information on important parish matters affecting the community and encourages comment from interested individuals and groups. The overall aim is to make council communications a two-way process: to give people the information to understand accurately what MPC does, whilst also enabling MPC to make informed decisions using information received from residents and partners. The principles of these guidelines apply to all parish councillors and the clerk to MPC. It is also intended for guidance for others communicating with the parish council.

The Importance of Good Communication

Good communications will enable MPC to:

• better understand the needs of the community and develop appropriate strategies and priorities;

• raise residents' satisfaction, trust and confidence by communicating about issues, services and opportunities in the parish;

• be an effective voice of the community;

• make best use of technology to innovate and engage with hard-to-reach groups;

• proactively challenge inaccuracies and misrepresentations that might undermine the image or integrity of MPC or the parish.

1. Parish Council Correspondence

(i) All correspondence relating to Mudford Parish Council should be addressed to the clerk (Proper Officer of the council) in the first instance either via email at clerk@mudford-pc.gov.uk or via post. This will ensure that the matter is recorded and passed to the relevant person or organisation as soon as practically possible.

(ii) Although all councillors have their own MPC email addresses name.surname@mudford-pc.gov.uk, the clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and passing on anything relevant to councillors or external agencies for information and/or action. All communications on behalf of the council will usually come from the clerk. In instances where this is not the case, the clerk should be copied in.

2. Agenda Items for Council and Committee meetings

(i) Agenda should be clear and concise. It 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 to be 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 fellow councillors to receive matters for "information only", this information will be circulated via the clerk.

3. Communications with the Press and Public

(i) The clerk will clear all press reports, or comments to the media, with the chairman of the council or the chairman of the relevant committee.

(ii) Press reports from the council, its committees or working parties should be from the clerk or via the reporter's own attendance at a meeting.

(iii) 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.

(iv) Unless a councillor is reporting the view of the council, they must make it clear to members of the public that they are expressing a personal view.

(v) If councillors receive a complaint from a member of the public, this should be dealt with under the council's adopted complaints procedure.

4. Councillor Correspondence to external parties

(i) As the clerk should be sending most of the council's correspondence from a councillor to other bodies, it needs to be made clear that it is written in their official capacity and has been authorised by the council.

(ii) A copy of all outgoing correspondence relating to the council or a councillor's role within it, should be sent to the clerk, and it be noted on the correspondence, e.g. "copy to the clerk" so that the recipient is aware that the clerk has been advised.

It is important to note that any emails sent to MPC email addresses will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act requirements. The clerk will acknowledge all Freedom of Information requests within seven working days and will reply fully within 20 working days of receipt of the request. If this is not possible, a further holding letter/email will be sent with an expected completion date.

Mudford Parish Council is the Data Controller as defined by GDPR of personal data processed by the Council and Councillors. The Data Protection lead is the clerk.

Commented [MPC1]: Clerk's proposal : To include the below text before the section "Communications with the Press and Public"

Communications Channels
Mudford Parish Council communicates information to residents and interested parties through its official website, www.mudford-pc.gov.uk. The website is administered by the Clerk and serves as the Council's primary source of published information, including agendas, minutes, policies, notices, and other council documents.
The Council maintains three official noticeboards:
o The noticeboard opposite the Village Hall displays full meeting agendas and statutory notices.
o The noticeboards at Hales Meadow and Primrose Lane display meeting notices and other key council information. Due to space constraints, full agendas are not normally displayed at these locations.
The Council operates an official Facebook page, "Mudford Parish Council", which is administered by the Clerk. The page is used to share Council information, public notices, community updates and other information of local importance.
Comments on the Council's Facebook page are disabled. Residents wishing to contact the Council should do so via the Clerk using the Council's published contact details.

5. Communications with Parish Council Staff

(i) Councillors must not give instructions to any member of staff, unless authorised to do so (for example, councillors sitting as a committee with appropriate delegated powers from the council).

(ii) No individual councillor, regardless of whether or not they are the chairman of the council, the chairman of a committee or other meeting, may give instructions to the clerk which are inconsistent or conflict with council decisions or arrangements for delegated power.

(iii) Telephone calls should be appropriate to the work of the council.

(iv) Emails:

- Instant replies should not be expected from the clerk and reasons for urgency should be stated.

- The councillors will receive the summons and all other relevant correspondence at their MPC email address: name.surname@mudford-pc.gov.uk unless their agreement is withdrawn.

(vi) Meetings with the clerk:

- Wherever possible an appointment should be made and meetings should be relevant to the work of the clerk.
- Councillors should be clear that the matter is legitimate council business and not matters driven by personal or political agendas.

This policy has been adopted by Mudford Parish Council at the meeting held on 28th May 2026.