



SNAITH & COWICK TOWN COUNCIL
Communications Policy

Version: 1.0

August 2022

1.0 Aim

Snaith & Cowick Town Council is fully committed to engaging proactively with the community through a range of channels including online outlets and social media sites. Ensuring accurate information is provided at all times is a priority therefore great care needs to be taken when addressing communications within both the Town Council itself and outside bodies.

The aim of this Communications Policy therefore, is to provide guidance to Councillors and Council Staff about the use of media such as e-mails and social networking sites, ensuring a consistent approach is adopted and maintained by all.

The Communications Policy will apply to all individuals at all levels of the Town Council, including all elected or co-opted Town Councillors, the Clerk to the Council and all other employees and volunteers.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with all other policies adopted by the Town Council such as the Code of Conduct.

2.0 General Communications

When communicating internally or with residents or other third parties, Councillors should always;

- Be mindful of the information you provide/post and ensure personal opinions cannot be construed as being that of the Town Council
- Respect the privacy of other Councillors and residents. Do not disclose confidential matters or criticise council policies or personnel

There will not always be an immediate response to communications as they may be discussed at a meeting so that a response can be agreed by the Town Council. When this is necessary, the item will be placed on the next available Agenda. Any response will then be included in the minutes of the meeting.

3.0 External Communications

The Town Clerk is the main point of contact for Snaith & Cowick Town Council and this is to who all correspondence for the Town Council should be addressed to.

Written Correspondence and E-mails

On becoming a Town Councillor, members will be issued with an e-mail address relating to the domain of Snaith & Cowick Town Council. Access to e-mail accounts will be removed as soon as an association with the Council ceases.

Please also take note of the following;

- Town Councillors are responsible for what they send via e-mails. The use of e-mail to correspond with residents or other third parties should be carried out in a professional manner and be only related to their council duties. No e-mail

should be sent or forwarded that is defamatory or offensive for whatever reason.

- When responding to e-mails from residents, Town Councillors should not inform or promise a course of action without first checking with the Town Clerk.
- E-mails from Town Councillors which are being sent to third parties should also be copied to the Town Clerk.

Social Media

The Town Council manage two social media sites in the public domain;

Website: www.snaithandcowicktowncouncil.com

Facebook: [Snaith & Cowick Town Council](#)

Both the Town Council website and Facebook page are used to disseminate useful information about Council services, news and events, community events organised by others and relevant information supplied by third parties such as the East Riding of Yorkshire Council and Humberside Police.

Facebook

Any comments by anybody on posts made by the Town Council on their official Facebook will not be responded to or considered to be a method of contacting the Council.

Messages received from residents or other third parties via the private Facebook Messenger forum will be responded to and considered a formal method of communicating with the Town Council.

The Press

The Town Clerk will coordinate all media enquiries into the Town Council Office.

It should also be noted that;

- Members of the Town Council and staff should not answer any queries if approached directly by the media and should divert the request to the Town Clerk.
- Only the Town Clerk is authorised to make statements to the Press on behalf of the Town Council. Any official Council press release is made on behalf of the Council as a whole and will be written and issued by the Town Clerk.
- Only the Town Clerk is authorised to communicate with the press on behalf of the Town Council. Town Councillors do not have this authority unless expressly permitted by the rest of the Council.
- All releases will accurately reflect the overall view of the Council, containing factual information and possibly approved quotations from individual Council Members.
- Press Releases will not promote the view of a specific political group, identify a Town Councillor's political affiliation or try to persuade the public to hold a particular view.

4.0 Internal Communications

Written Correspondence and E-mails

Correspondence sent by Town Councillors to other bodies must be written in their official capacity and should be authorised by the Clerk. A copy of all outgoing correspondence from Town Councillors relating to the Council or a Councillor's role should be copied to the Clerk for information.

- E-mails should be checked regularly and Councillors should acknowledge receipt of e-mails when requested to do so.
- E-mails sent to groups of people must be relevant to all concerned. Please consider if all recipients are necessary before sending the e-mail.
- Councillors and staff should not debate council matters over e-mail. If this is necessary, any decisions reached are to be formally minuted at the next Full Council meeting.

Social Media

The Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk are the only administrators for both the Council's website and Facebook page. The Town Council do currently not operate a Twitter feed.

Please note that Town Councillors do not have the authority to issue public statements on behalf of the Council.

Facebook

Personal Facebook accounts are permitted but the following should be observed as Good Practice guidelines;

- Council members and staff have a professional image to uphold and how we conduct ourselves individually online can impact this image.
- Do not disclose confidential matters or criticise Town Council policies, decisions, or personnel.
- Evaluate whether a particular post puts your effectiveness at Snaith & Cowick Town Council at risk.
- Avoid publishing any information that you could have only accessed in your position as a Councillor or member of staff.
- Don't publish comments that you would not be prepared to make in writing or in fact-to-face contact.
- Use Council facilities for personal or political purposes

WhatsApp

The Town Council operates a WhatsApp messaging forum internally between Councillors and staff. This is intended to be an informal communication tool only.

The Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk hold the administration rights but all Councillors and staff are able to send and receive messages to the rest of the group.

The media can be used;

- For council staff to prompt councillors to check e-mails for important information
- To send reminders for meetings
- To transfer work-related photos which are unable to be sent via e-mail.

WhatsApp should not be used for;

- Debating council matters. This should be done face-to-face during Full Council meetings.
- Engaging in conversations which are non-work related. Such conversations should be held using your individual private accounts.
- To engage in disagreements over council-related matters.

Councillors and The Press

Town Councillors press releases are personal and are written and issued by the Councillor responsible. They should not refer to any officer of the Council, include the Council logo or the Council telephone number as the point of contact.

Councillors may not hold themselves out to be acting on behalf of the Town Council and must not communicate as Councillor in any other matter than in their official capacity.

Councillors are not permitted to use the title 'Councillor' in their private capacity.

Note: Members should be aware that case law states that the role of Councillor overrides the right to act as an individual. This means that Councillors should be careful when expressing individual views to the news media. Councillors also have an obligation to respect Council policy once made; while it may be legitimate for a Councillor to make it clear that he or she disagreed with a policy and voted against it (if this took place in an open session), they should not seek to undermine a decision through the news media.