

NHPC E-Mail Policy

Introduction

E-mail is now a recognised means of communication, but it needs to be reasonable, controlled and in a manner which does not cause offence either to other Parish Councillors or members of the public. Councillors' individual communications including e-mails should always follow the principles of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

Policies

a). In circumstances where one or more members of the Council are not on e-mail, or do not have access to a computer, any correspondence should have paper copies forwarded to those Councillors when it is appropriate to include them on a circulation list. It would normally be expected, however, that anyone becoming a Councillor would make a reasonable attempt to obtain internet access and an e-mail address in order to be able to carry out that role fully.

b). E-mail exchanges should not be designed to agree work or policies that should be debated and agreed at full council. It is however an appropriate method to increase the efficiency of Council operations in cases such as the following:

- Gaining approval for expenditure where it is not a sensible option to wait until the next appropriate meeting to make a decision (e.g. where safety related work needs to be carried out urgently on Council property or equipment).
- Gathering initial information and identifying areas of concern on any complex issues in order to reduce the time necessary to debate that topic when it is brought to a Council meeting.
- Drafting communications to other bodies for finalising at a subsequent Council meeting.

c). Councillors need to take into account the fact that sometimes e-mails circulated to a number of other Councillors may take several days to be seen by all of them. This may also lead to a series of replies becoming disjointed.

d). It is not appropriate to run e-mail exchanges between Councillors which excludes some Councillors who are entitled to see the information contained in the e-mails content or attachments. For example matters relating to a particular Committee should be circulated to all of the members of that Committee.

e). Councillors must ensure that they have the authority to send the information contained in any e-mail or its attachments and that it is only sent to those people who are entitled to receive the information.

f). Any councillor sending e-mail correspondence must have regard to ensure that the contents: -

- i). are (to their knowledge) factually correct,
- ii). are not of a confidential nature, or contain information that could be seen as bringing the Parish Council, Councillors, or employees of the council into disrepute,

iii). do not breach the Data Protection Act, a non-disclosure agreement or information that might provide an external person or organisation with an unfair advantage.

g). Where Councillors set up a personal e-mail address that identifies them in some way as a Councillor / representative of North Hinksey Parish Council (e.g. through inclusion of 'NHPC', 'Councillor', 'Cllr' or similar elements within the address) that e-mail address should only ever be used for Council business and not for unrelated personal e-mails. N.B. It is not a requirement that Councillors do set up such an address, and it is perfectly suitable to use a normal personal e-mail address for both Council and personal e-mails.

h). All Councillors' e-mail addresses will be published on the NHPC website as part of their contact details other than the e-mails of those Councillors who express a wish to the Parish Clerk or the Webmaster not to have their e-mail address published.

Adopted by North Hinksey Parish Council October 27th 2016.