



STAMFORD TOWN COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

This Policy is designed to assist Town Councillors and staff to effectively communicate with the general public.

Objective

To provide a helpful response to telephone, or written enquiries in an efficient and polite manner.

Personal Contact

This can be in person or by telephone.

If it relates to a Town Council service, then the caller will be dealt with by the appropriate member of staff. If that member of staff is unavailable, contact details will be taken to ensure the caller can be contacted at the earliest suitable opportunity.

If it relates to a County Council or District Council service the caller will be advised to contact the County Council or District Council by providing them with the following appropriate number / e-mail:

- Lincolnshire County Council – 01522 552 222
customer_services@lincolnshire.gov.uk
- South Kesteven District Council – 01476 40 60 80

Town Councillors and Staff are advised against acting as an intermediary with the County Council and District Council Contact Centres; this is not being unhelpful, but to aid the trained staff of the County and District Council and /or their trained call centre staff to direct enquiries to the appropriate department or other public service. No direct dial numbers are to be given for any officer(s) at either the County or District Council.

Written Enquiries

These could be by letter or, more frequently, by email. Wherever possible a detailed reply should be given within 5 working days. If that is not possible, a holding response should be sent within 5 days.

There is no need to respond to unsolicited invitations or spam emails, indeed there are very good reasons for not so doing.

Inevitably, the Town Council may receive repeated communications from individual members of the public on the same subject(s). It is permissible for staff to merely acknowledge such emails/letters without having to respond to each and every point.

In any such case, the Town Clerk should be consulted.

It should always be remembered that it is possible to recover any electronic correspondence.

Town Councillor's Details

If requested, the staff will provide a member of the public with the names, addresses and telephone numbers for Town Councillors. Only if permission has been obtained from a councillor to do so.

Media Statements

The Town Clerk has delegated powers to issue press releases on behalf of the Town Council to protect its reputation and where requested, copied to all Town Councillors.

Press releases from the Town Council need not be formally worded in stilted language but must not be partisan.

For the avoidance of doubt, an individual Town Councillor or political party may issue their own statements to the media but those must not give the impression of being a release from the Town Council.

Purdah

Purdah is the period prior to an election, once a notice of poll has been officially given by the Returning Officer. It applies to Town and County Council elections as well as other national elections (e.g. a General Election).

It also applies if there is a local by-election.

During such a period, special care is needed to avoid any impression that the Town Council, as a body, supports any aspirant for elected office or a particular party. More specific advice will be issued by the NALC and / or the Returning Officer at the County Council. A separate policy statement in respect of the 'purdah' period is available from the Town Clerk.

Obscene & Abusive Language

Staff and Councillors are not obliged to listen to abusive and obscene tirades or address members of the public in this way. In such a case the caller should politely be asked to desist and advised that if they continue to use such language the call will be terminated. If the abuse or obscenity continues then the call can be terminated.

Care however should be taken as some 'vivid descriptions' are used in the ordinary course of speech by certain sections of the community. A judgement should be made from the tone if that is the position. In such cases a councillor or member of staff can ask for moderation but may choose to continue the contact.