

# **FLIXBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL**

## **COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

<b>Name of organisation</b>	Flixborough Parish Council
<b>Date Policy Agreed</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> January 2026
<b>Date of Next Review</b>	January 2028
<b>Signature (Chair)</b>	<b>Sukai Wilkinson</b>
<b>Signature (Clerk)</b>	<b>Vicky Haines</b>

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. **Flixborough Parish Council** (“the Parish Council”) 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.
- 1.2. The overall aim is to make council communications a two-way process: to give people the information to understand accurately what the Parish Council does, whilst also enabling the Parish Council to make informed decisions using information received from residents and partners.
- 1.3. The principles of this policy apply to Parish Councillors, the Clerk to the Council and staff. It is also intended for guidance for others communicating with or on behalf of the Council.

### **2. Aim**

- 2.1. The aim of this Policy is to outline the requirements and provide guidance for all forms of internal and external Parish Council communications.
- 2.2. The Parish Council is committed to providing accurate and timely information about its functions, decisions, and actions. Care must be taken to ensure communications are clear, lawful, and respectful.
- 2.3. This Policy applies to all members and employees of the Parish Council. It includes, but is not limited to, communications between:
  - Parish Councillors, the Clerk, and employees
  - Residents and the public
  - Borough Councillors and staff
  - MPs
  - Other public sector organisations (Police, Health, Fire etc)
  - Suppliers and contractors

- Voluntary groups and other organisations
- The media
- Visitors and those who work in the area.

### **3. The Importance of Good Communication**

3.1. Good communications will enable the Council 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, the borough and region.
- Be an effective voice of the community.
- Maintain and enhance the reputation of the council.
- Raise the profile of the parish.
- Make best use of technology to innovate and engage with hard-to-reach groups such as young people.
- Proactively challenge inaccuracies and misrepresentations that might undermine the image or integrity of the council or the parish.

### **4. Legal Context**

4.1. This policy operates within the legal frameworks provided by:

- The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960
- The Local Government Acts 1972 and 1986
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Data Protection Act 1998 (and subsequent GDPR updates)
- The Council's Standing Orders

### **5. General Communication Guidelines**

5.1. All Information that is communicated must be factual, fair, thorough, and transparent.

5.2. The point of contact for the Council is the Clerk, and it is to the Clerk that all correspondence for the Parish Council should be addressed.

5.3. Where clarity is essential, Parish Council decisions and communications should be documented in writing and formally approved.

5.4. Anonymous correspondence will not be acknowledged or responded to.

5.5. Miscommunication risks should be mitigated by seeking formal written approval for significant communications.

- 5.6. Communications constituting debate, discussion, or decisions should be conducted at Parish Council meetings or, in the case of delegated sub-committees or working groups, reported to Council meetings, unless otherwise prohibited by GDPR.
- 5.7. Any discussion conducted in a closed meeting due to GDPR will have the outcome minuted and reported publicly while keeping in accordance with GDPR and data privacy.
- 5.8. Official statements must align with the Parish Council's corporate position. Members and staff must avoid misrepresenting Parish Council views or providing personal opinions in an official capacity.
- 5.9. When authorised to communicate on behalf of the Parish Council, individuals must explicitly state their role and authority, signing communications as "on behalf of [Parish Council Name]".
- 5.10. Parish Councillors, the Clerk to the Council and staff do not have a right to obtain confidential information / documentation unless they can demonstrate a clear case of 'need to know.'

## **6. Personal Communications**

- 6.1. Parish Councillors and staff must not use their official titles in personal communications.
- 6.2. Personal views on Parish Council decisions or actions should not be expressed publicly in a way that misrepresents or conflicts with the Council's stance.
- 6.3. To mitigate a risk of misunderstanding or misrepresentation, Parish Councillors must make clear when they are communicating 'as a Parish Councillor' or 'not as a Parish Councillor.'

## **7. Communicating Internally**

- 7.1. All internal communications are subject to FOI and must follow the Council Code of Conduct.
- 7.2. Internal communications should be for logistical and information-sharing purposes and not constitute debate, discussion, or decisions.
- 7.3. No communications should constitute debate or discussion leading to a Council decision.
- 7.4. All decisions must be made in public meetings unless explicitly delegated.
- 7.5. Any working group, sub-committee, or meeting of Councillors outside of a Council meeting should be reported at the next Parish Council meeting.
- 7.6. Agenda items for the Parish Council should be clear and concise and contain sufficient information to enable Parish Councillors to prepare to enable them to make an informed decision.
- 7.7. Items for information should be kept to a minimum on an agenda.

- 7.8. Where the Clerk or a Parish Councillor wishes fellow Parish Councillors to receive matters for 'information only,' this information will be circulated via the Clerk.

## **8. Communicating with the Public**

- 8.1. The Parish Council has a duty to inform the public how their Council Tax is spent.
- 8.2. The Parish Council presents its draft budget at the November meeting, reports its budget monitoring at meetings at least quarterly and publicises its Annual Statement of Accounts.
- 8.3. The Parish Council will keep residents informed of its activities, projects, forthcoming events, public information, and activities through the Website, Noticeboards and Minutes.
- 8.4. Meeting Agendas should be clear and enable the public to understand what matters are being considered and what decisions are to be taken at a meeting.
- 8.5. The Parish Council will also be informed through the Public Forum which precedes a Parish Council Meeting.
- 8.6. The Parish Council values open communication with members of the public and aims to respond courteously and promptly to inquiries.
- 8.7. All official communications with the public should be clear, factual, and professional.
- 8.8. Parish Councillors and staff should only convey the Parish Councils agreed position, avoiding personal opinions or speculation.
- 8.9. For clarity, significant public communications should be provided in writing and formally approved by the Parish Council.
- 8.10. When engaging with the public informally (e.g., at events or casual meetings), Parish Councillors must ensure they do not misrepresent the Parish Councils views or commit the Parish Council to any actions without proper authority. Actions can only be agreed at Council meetings.
- 8.11. Anonymous inquiries or correspondence may not be acknowledged or responded to, except in exceptional circumstances approved by the Clerk.

## **9. Communication with the Media**

- 9.1. The Clerk is the primary contact for all media enquiries, including interviews, statements, or articles. If the Clerk is unavailable, the media should contact the Chair.
- 9.2. Only the Clerk is authorised to communicate on behalf of the Parish Council unless another individual has been expressly authorised by a Parish Council resolution.
- 9.3. All communications with the media must reflect the views and positions of the Parish Council.

- 9.4. Parish Councillors or staff speaking in a private capacity must not use Parish Council titles (e.g., “Councillor” or “Clerk”) and must clarify they are not representing the Parish Council.
- 9.5. The press is welcome to attend council meetings.
- 9.6. Any request to record or film Parish Council meetings must be submitted in advance to the Clerk, and the Chair should be notified prior to the meeting.
- 9.7. The Council must meet all reasonable requests to accommodate the press and respect the privacy of any attending public.

## **10. Communication in Writing (Including Emails)**

- 10.1. Wherever possible, the Clerk should deal with all Parish Council correspondence.
- 10.2. The Clerk will keep a copy of all letters. Letters will be scanned and stored electronically where possible.
- 10.3. Official Parish Council email addresses should be used for all correspondence to ensure transparency and compliance with Freedom of Information laws. Personal email accounts should not be used for Parish Council business and may be subject to legal scrutiny.
- 10.4. Parish Councillors must ensure respect and professionalism in their written communications, in line with the Code of Conduct.
- 10.5. Parish Council business discussions should occur in public meetings unless otherwise specified in the Standing Orders. Emails should not be used for debate unless permitted for specific matters, such as planning issues.
- 10.6. Confidential information must remain protected, and GDPR requirements must be observed.

## **11. Other Forms of Communication (Phone, Text, Online Platforms/Social Media)**

- 11.1. Parish Councillors and staff may use other practical means of communication to conduct Parish Council business (e.g., sharing logistical information) for the purposes of expediency but should be aware that all channels used will be subject to FOI.
- 11.2. Any meeting of Councillors should be noted in the next Council meeting.  
Social Media and Online Platforms
- 11.3. ‘Social media’ is the term commonly given to websites and online tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way by sharing information, opinions, knowledge, and interests. Examples of social media websites include: Social networking (e.g. [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)), Video sharing (e.g. [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)), Micro-blogging (e.g. [www.x.com](http://www.x.com))
- 11.4. The Clerk manages the Parish Council’s official website and social media accounts, ensuring compliance with legal and professional standards.

- 11.5. Parish Councillors may share key information about Parish Council activities on the Flixborough Parish Council Facebook for the sole purpose of publishing information about the work of the Parish Council to a wider audience subject to the following conditions:
- 11.5.1. Prior approval must be granted by a Parish Council resolution. Urgent information can be published by the Clerk with agreement of the Chair of the Parish Council.
  - 11.5.2. Social media must NOT be used in the recruitment process for employees or new councillors, other than for the sole purpose of placing vacancy advertisements.
  - 11.5.3. Parish Councillors should be familiar with the terms of use and always adhere to these.
  - 11.5.4. No information should be published that is not already known to be in the public domain i.e. available on the Parish Council's website, contained in minutes of meetings, stated in publicised policies and procedures.
  - 11.5.5. Everyone must be mindful that information published in this way may stay in the public domain indefinitely, without the opportunity for retrieval/deletion.
  - 11.5.6. Copyright laws must be respected.
  - 11.5.7. Other organisations should not be referenced without their approval.
- 11.6. Social media posts by the Parish Council are limited to factual, up-to-date information. Responses may be monitored and removed if deemed inappropriate.
- 11.7. Parish Councillors and staff may maintain personal online presences but must not imply Parish Council representation or use official titles in personal posts.

## **12. Persistent Correspondence – Individuals and Groups**

- 12.1. The Parish Council may limit responses to repeated or vexatious correspondence, particularly if it becomes abusive or places undue strain on resources.
- 12.2. Decisions to limit correspondence must be formally resolved by the Parish Council, with individuals informed of the decision and provided with a right to appeal.
- 12.3. Correspondence from groups lacking clear official representation (e.g., without a signature from a clerk or chairperson) may not be acknowledged.
- 12.4. Groups will be informed if the Parish Council decides not to respond further to their communications.

## **13. Meetings**

- 13.1. Parish Councillors are summoned to attend Public Meetings by the Clerk. Only exceptional reasons for non-attendance will be accepted by the Council.
- 13.2. The Clerk will notify Parish Councillors of the agenda, date, time, and location of the meeting. Any requested agenda items are to be received by the Clerk no later than the second Tuesday of the month. The Public are invited to attend all meetings.
- 13.3. In the situation where council business is discussed in closed session, the council may be approached for comment on items discussed, with due respect to the confidentiality of the issues.
- 13.4. The requirements and procedures of a meeting are detailed in the council's standing orders.
- 13.5. Outside of the meetings, any informal or progress meeting with Parish Councillors or the Clerk should be:
  - By appointment wherever possible.
  - Relevant to the work of the Parish Council and the individual Councillor.
  - Made clear that the matter is legitimate Parish Council business and not matters driven by personal or political agendas.