



Newmarket TOWN COUNCIL

Communications Policy

Adopted by Council 23rd September 2019

Primary publications and Communications media

The following are the primary publications and communications media which can be used by Newmarket Town Council.

Publications

Newsletter; Many people still like to get information in hard copy. It may be too costly to deliver a quarterly newsletter to every house unless distribution could be via a free newspaper but one could be distributed through a number of outlet points.

Agendas, reports and minutes: Are sent to the press, and councillors. Public copies are available in the Memorial Hall and website. Clear message on agenda welcoming public participation.

Town Guide: produced every other year. Newmarket Town Council retains editorial control.

Publications/leaflets: Annual Report, Strategy and Policy Documents in Constitution.

Noticeboards: Memorial Hall. Consider noticeboard in each Ward.

Media Relations

Press releases and feature material: Produced through the Town Council Manager's office,

Media statements: These are mostly reactive and cleared with the Town Council Manager **Advertisements:** produced for information, promotional and recruitment purposes and to meet statutory requirements (e.g. public notices).

Communication

Town Council Website: www.Newmarket.gov.uk. This will be a major vehicle for informing local people about local events.

The town council will also provide other relevant town websites with information

E-mails: We have a growing database of groups and organisations and this can be an effective method of getting out messages quickly.

Apps for Town Centre news. Social media.

Face to Face

Annual Town Meeting: Chance for residents to hear an update on events for the town and to give comments. Once a year before the end of May.

Day to day contact with staff and councillors-all are ambassadors.

Surveys and Market Research: A great opportunity for use by the Town Council.

Bring in expertise: Consider appointing non-councillor members to Leisure Services Committee to help links with partners

Through Close working with Newmarket organisations

These include:

Love Newmarket-Newmarket BID

Discover Newmarket

Chamber of Commerce/Trade

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

District and county councils.

Events/Opportunities

The Carnival, Winter Wonderland, etc. Work more with partners.

Winter Wonderland is a great example of two elements being run as one event by the Town Council and Love Newmarket (BID) working together.

Ongoing

Giving Grants – (could ask organisations to try and gain publicity and name check NTC) Events with partners

Protocol on Communications

Introduction

This protocol was adopted by Council in support of the Council's Communication and Marketing Policy. It is based on a model by the National Association of Local Councils, but tailored to the needs of the Town Council.

A. Town Council Correspondence

1. The point of contact for the town council is the Town Council Manager, and it is to the Town Council Manager that all correspondence for the Town Council should be addressed.
2. The Town Council Manager should deal with all correspondence following a meeting.
3. No individual Councillor or Officer should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the Town Council, a committee, sub-committee or working party. In particular, councillors and officers do not have a right to obtain confidential information/ documentation unless they can demonstrate a 'need to know'.
4. All official correspondence should be sent by the Town Council Manager or another officer authorised by the Town Council Manager to do so, in the name of the Council using Council letter headed paper. Emails are to be treated as other correspondence and may only be sent by authorised officers, on matters which are within their job descriptions and delegated authority.
5. The Mayor may sign letters directly initiated or prepared on his/her behalf by staff, but only on matters Directly related to the role of Mayor, or other matters which another officer cannot sign such as Town Council Manager's letter of appointment or contract.
6. Where correspondence from the Town Council Manager to a Councillor is copied to another person, The addressee should be made aware that a copy is being forwarded to that other person (e.g. copy to XX). No blind email copies should be used.

B. Agenda Items for Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Parties

1. Agendas should be clear and concise. Reports are to be attached where appropriate, which 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.

Significant background documents should be circulated to Councillors.

2. Items for information should be kept to a minimum on an agenda, and will normally be contained in Members Briefings, which are to be circulated at least once each month.
3. Where the Town Council Manager or a councillor wishes fellow Councillors to receive matters for “information only”, this information will be circulated via the Town Council Manager, or with the Town Council Manager’s agreement.

C. Communications with the Press and Public

1. The Town Council Manager will clear all press reports on behalf of the Council, or comments to the media, in consultation with the Mayor, or the Chairman of the relevant committee when appropriate.
2. Press reports from the Council, its committees or working parties should be from the Town Council Manager or a delegated officer or via the reporter’s own attendance at a meeting.
3. Unless a Councillor has been specifically authorised by the Council to speak to the media on a particular issue, Councillors who are asked for comment by the press should refer them to the Town Council Manager. Even if authorised, it is usually safer not to make an immediate comment and to phone back having thought about the matter. This gives time if necessary to seek advice from the Town Council Manager.
4. Councillors have a right to express personal views but must make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as their personal view. Unless a Councillor is absolutely certain that he/she is reporting the view of the Council, they must make it clear to members of the public that they are expressing a personal view.
5. If Councillors receive a complaint from a member of the public about an action of the Council or lack of action, this should be dealt with under the Council’s adopted Customer Care Policy and Complaints Code, or via a council agenda item. This does not limit a councillor from carrying out his or her normal caseload on behalf of members of the public which they represent.

D. Councillor Correspondence to external parties

1. As the Town Council Manager should be sending most of the council’s correspondence, any correspondence from a Councillor to other bodies needs to make clear that it is written in their official capacity and has been authorised by the Town Council. Councillors may write letters as individual members concerning ward or Town matters as long as they make it clear they are acting as an individual councillor and do not commit the Council.
2. A copy of all outgoing correspondence relating to the Council or a councillor’s role within it, should, out of courtesy, be sent to the Town Council Manager, and it be noted on the correspondence, e.g. “copy to the Town Council Manager” so that the recipient is aware that the Officer has been advised.

E. Communications with Town Council Staff

1. Councillors must not give instructions to any member of staff, unless authorised to do so (for example, three or more Councillors sitting as a committee or sub-committee with appropriate delegated powers from the Council). The Town Council Manager however would encourage councillors to speak directly to relevant members of staff about issues, but to keep the Town Council Manager advised.
2. No individual Councillor, regardless of whether or not they are the Mayor, or the Chairman of a committee, may give instructions to the Town Council Manager or to another employee which are

inconsistent or conflict with Council decisions or arrangements for delegated power.

3. Telephone calls should be appropriate to the work of the Town Council. Again, individual councillors must not appear to represent the Council as a whole, unless authorised to do so.

4. E-mails:

Instant replies should not be expected from the Town Council Manager; reasons for urgency should be stated;

Information to Councillors should normally be directed via the Town Council Manager or other Authorised officer;

E-mails from Councillors to external parties should be copied to the Town Council Manager;

Councillors should acknowledge their e-mails when requested to do so.

5. Meetings with the Town Council Manager or other officers:

Wherever possible an appointment should be made;

Meetings should be relevant to the work of that particular officer;

Councillors should be clear that the matter is legitimate council business and not matters driven by personal or political agendas.

F. Councillors seeking information from outside bodies, organisations or individuals

1. Councillors must not seek information from outside bodies, organisations or individuals on behalf of the Council unless authorised by the Council. They may of course do this as an individual Councillor.
2. Chairmen and other councillors may be authorised to seek information on behalf of the Council to take some work load off the Town Council Manager or because of their individual experience or skills. Any form of negotiation, must always be undertaken when accompanied by an officer so that the Councillor is not compromised.
3. Councillors may only represent the Council on outside bodies if authorised to do so.