



Newport and Carisbrooke Community Council

Council Name: **Newport and Carisbrooke Community Council**
 Council Address: **64 High Street
 Newport
 Isle of Wight
 PO30 1BA**
 Email Address: **clerk@newportwight.org.uk**
 Telephone number: **(01983) 559119**

COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

AIMS

- To establish clear, easy to use channels of communication between the Community Council and members of the public, and vice versa.
- To provide information on important matters in an appropriate manner so as to facilitate and encourage informed comment from interested individuals and groups.

INTRODUCTION

Each Community Councillor has a duty to represent, without bias, the interest of the whole community. They will endeavour to do their best and are available to help Members of the public with regard to matters relating to the Community Council. They may be contacted by telephone and a contact list is displayed on the community council noticeboard inside St James' Square and the website www.newportwight.org.uk. If the matter is important, then a letter to the Community Clerk will ensure that this will be brought before the Community Council and dealt with in a suitable and professional manner.

It is the Community Council's intention to comply with the schedule as below.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

- The Community Council will meet at 6.00pm on the second Monday of the month.
- The Annual Meeting of the Community Council will be held in May and will be the meeting when Councillors will elect the Chair and appoint the Vice Chair for the forthcoming year.
- The Annual Parish Meeting will take place in May in each year.
- There will be no Community Council meeting in August.
- A 15-minute discussion period for members of the public will be held at the beginning of the Community Council Meeting.

NOTICEBOARDS

- Community Councillors with contact methods consented to in the councillor contact form being displayed.
- Community Council meetings dates for the year
- Community Council Ward areas.
- Notice of the annual audited accounts will be displayed when appropriate.
- The Community Council meeting notice will be displayed at a time in accordance with legislation.
- Notices for members of the public will be displayed as and when appropriate.

COMMUNITY WEBSITE

- Community Councillors with contact telephone numbers
- Community Council meeting dates for the year
- Community Council Ward areas
- The last set of approved Community Council Minutes
- The Chairman's Annual Report
- The Community Clerk will ensure that all Community Council information included on the website is regularly updated by passing relevant papers to the team involved in creating the site.

CORRESPONDENCE

- All correspondence relating to the council should be addressed to the Community Clerk in the first instance. This will ensure that the matter is recorded and passed to the relevant person or organisation as soon as practicably possible.
- All correspondence to the Community Clerk will be acknowledged within one week of receipt.
- If a member of the public wishes a matter to be formally discussed at a Community Council meeting, then the Community Clerk must be notified at least 7 days prior to the meeting to enable the item to be placed on the agenda.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The Annual Community Meeting is held so that member of the public can have the opportunity to listen to the progress of the Community Council over the last year and have the opportunity to debate local issues and celebrate local events and activities.

PRESS RELEASES

Newport and Carisbrooke Community Council welcomes enquiries from the press and media and recognises that our relationship with the press helps us communicate with residents. The Council recognises the need for openness and this should be reflected in how we deal with the Press.

The aim of the protocol is to ensure that the Community Council is seen to communicate in a professional and objective manner.

This protocol should be read in conjunction with the Members' Code of Conduct. The Council's approach to the media should be:

- Open and honest
- Proactive
- Responsive and timely

INFORMATION

There are two types of press release-

1. OFFICIAL COUNCIL RELEASES

An official Council release is made on behalf of the Council as a whole; it will be written by an officer and issued by the Community Clerk. It is non-party political and includes a quote from the relevant councillor(s). This is usually the Chair of the Council or Committee Chairman. A press release will be issued following each full council meeting.

2. COUNCILLOR PRESS RELEASES

Councillors' press releases are personal and are written and issued by the Councillor responsible. This release may or may not be political and should not include the name of a Council Officer, or a Council telephone number as a point of contact. It would be beneficial for copies of intended releases, especially those of a factual nature, to be provided to the Community Clerk. Councillors seeking advice can either contact the Community Clerk or Monitoring Officer.

PRESS RELEASE PROTOCOL

The following forms the Protocol for Council Members and Officers.

- All official Council press releases will include a quotation from the relevant Councillor. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to also include the Ward Councillor or other Councillor promoting the scheme. If no quote received within 24 hours of email request being sent by the Clerk, the press release can be issued without.
- In line with service standards all official Council press releases are to be issued on a template provided by the Community Clerk. This template includes the Community Council logo.
- Official press releases will not identify the political party or group affiliation of any Member(s) quoted in the release.
- The Community Clerk is the first line of decision making in terms of what is newsworthy for official press releases and shall make the final decision on whether a press release shall be issued, unless otherwise directed by a resolution made by the Council or Committee. A decision to proceed with a press release can also be made by no less than 3 of the following: Chair, Vice-Chair, or Chairs of the committees.
- In the years when elections occur, during periods from the issue of the Notice of Election until the day of the Election, Officers will issue no releases quoting Council Members. During this time, any quotes will be from Officers.
- The role of Officers is to advise and provide support and advice to Council members in their communication activities.
- Council Members are solely responsible for the writing and distribution of all councillor press releases and any Editor's Letters to the media.
- Council Member releases must not use the Community Council's logo or use the Council or an Officer as a point of contact.
- Officers and Council Members must act reasonably and responsibly.
- Council Members are reminded that they must not misuse Council resources for political or other inappropriate purposes. Should the Council receive a Freedom of Information request on a topic on which there is correspondence (email or written) from or with Members, normally that correspondence would have to be disclosed, unless it was exempt. The fact that the disclosure of the correspondence may prove embarrassing would not, of itself, prevent disclosure.
 - In addition, care should be taken when processing personal data. The Data Protection Act 1998 prevents the use of personal information other than for the purposes for which it was supplied. Members should bear this in mind when using any personal data which may be supplied to them by their constituents.
- In general, the Community Clerk will be responsible for interpretation of the Protocol.

FACEBOOK AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables Newport & Carisbrooke Community Council to interact in a way that improves the communications both within the Council and between the Council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

The Council has a website, Facebook, (X to be removed and LinkedIn being inserted), Instagram and TikTok account and uses email to communicate. The Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time the Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur this Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL WILL MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- Be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- Not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright;
- Not contain any personal information.
- If it is official Council business, it will be moderated by either the Chair/Vice Chair of the Council or the Clerk to the Council;
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives, we ask you to follow these guidelines:

- Be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarity, threats or abuse of language will not be tolerated.
- Differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including the Council members or staff, will not be permitted.
- Share freely and be generous with official Council posts, but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.
- Stay on topic.
- Refrain from using the Council's Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok accounts for commercial purposes or to advertise market or sell products.

The site is not monitored 24/7 and we will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, we will endeavour to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people or authorities. Please do not include personal/private information in your social media posts to us.

Sending a message/post via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or TikTok will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and we will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through these channels. Instead, please make direct contact with the council's Clerk and/or members of the council by emailing.

We retain the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- Obscene or racist content
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language
- Potentially libellous statements.
- Plagiarised material; any material in violation of any laws, including copyright
- Private, personal information published without consent
- Information or links unrelated to the content of the forum
- Commercial promotions or spam
- Alleges a breach of a Council's policy or the law

The Council's response to any communication received not meeting the above criteria will be to either ignore, inform the sender of our policy or send a brief response as appropriate. This will be at the Council's discretion based on the message received, given our limited resources available. Any information posted on the Facebook page not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. Repeat offenders will be blocked from the Facebook page. The Council may post a statement that '*A post breaching the Council's Social Media Policy has been removed*'. If the post alleges a breach of a Council's policy or the law the person who posted it will be asked to submit a formal complaint to the Council or report the matter to the Police as soon as possible to allow due process.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL WEBSITE

Where necessary, we may direct those contacting us to our website to see the required information, or we may forward their question to one of our Councillors for consideration and response. We may not respond to every comment we receive particularly if we are experiencing a heavy workload.

The Council may, at its discretion, allow and enable approved local groups to have and maintain a presence on its website for the purpose of presenting information about the group's activities. The local group would be responsible for maintaining the content and ensuring that it meets the Council's 'rules and expectation' for the web site. The Council reserves the right to remove any or all of a local group's information from the web site if it feels that the content does not meet the Council's 'rules and expectation' for its website. Where content on the website is maintained by a local group it should be clearly marked that such content is not the direct responsibility of the Council.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL EMAIL

The Clerk to the council has their own council email address for specific enquiries (clerk@newportwight.org.uk) and general enquiries should go to info@newportwight.org.uk.

The email accounts are monitored mainly during office hours, Monday to Friday, and we aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as we can. An 'out of office' message should be used when appropriate. This will usually be applied during periods of absence which extend beyond 24 hours during the usual working week, this does not apply to weekends.

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and passing on any relevant mail to members or external agencies for information and/or action. All communications on behalf of the Council will usually come from the Clerk, and/or otherwise will always be copied to the Clerk. All new Emails requiring data to be passed on, will be followed up with a Data consent form for completion before action is taken with that correspondence.

Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views, if appropriate, copy to the Clerk. NB any emails copied to the Clerk become official and will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act.

These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

Do not forward personal information on to other people or groups outside of the Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

SMS (TEXTING)

Members and the Clerk may use SMS as a convenient way to communicate at times. All are reminded that this policy also applies to such messages.

VIDEO CONFERENCING E.G. ZOOM/TEAMS

If this medium is used to communicate, please note that this policy also applies to the use of video conferencing.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION WITHIN THE COUNCIL

1. The Council provides all members with Council email addresses for the conduct of Council business and members are strongly recommended to use the email addresses provided for that purpose, observing the protocols of conduct set out elsewhere in this policy.
2. The Council does not use WhatsApp or similar platforms for council business.
3. Any use of WhatsApp or similar platform set up by councillors is their own responsibility. It should not be used to conduct official council business and council data should not be transferred to those systems.

COUNCILLORS ARE EXPECTED TO ABIDE BY THE CODE OF CONDUCT AND THE DATA PROTECTION ACT IN ALL THEIR WORK ON BEHALF OF THE COUNCIL

As more and more information becomes available at the press of a button, it is vital that all information is treated sensitively and securely. Councillors are expected to maintain an awareness of the confidentiality of information that they have access to and not to share confidential information with anyone. Failure to properly observe confidentiality may be seen as a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct and will be dealt with through its prescribed procedures (at the extreme it may also involve a criminal investigation).

Members should also be careful only to cc essential recipients on emails i.e. to avoid use of the 'Reply to All' option if at all possible but of course copying in all who need to know and ensuring that email trails have been removed.

INDIVIDUAL COUNCILLOR FACEBOOK PAGES

STAYING SAFE AND SECURE ON FACEBOOK

As with all social media platforms, it's vital to stay safe and secure on Facebook. Make sure to use a secure login and password and enable two-factor authentication for your account. Two-factor authentication (or multi-factor authentication) means that when you log in to your social media account, you'll need to not just add your password but also either enter a code which is sent to your mobile phone number or email or alternatively authorise your login on an app on your phone.

DEALING WITH NEGATIVITY AND ABUSE

Be mindful about how you post on Facebook and other social media platforms. Unfortunately, some users like to be negative. Don't forget you are also able to suspend your page temporarily if you feel you need a break.

USE OUR 'RULES OF ENGAGEMENT' INFOGRAPHICS

You should also add the **LGA Digital citizenship 'rules of engagement' infographics** to your Page. These are easy to download and add to your profile and make it clear to Facebook users how you intend to use your Facebook Page (or other social media channel).

REVIEW

This document will be reviewed annually.

COMMENTS

Any comments or queries regarding this document should be made to the Community Clerk.

Adopted: September 2025

Amended: March 2026