

Steeple Bumpstead Parish Council Email / Communications policy



The purpose of this document is to define how email communications are handled within the Parish Council

1. Email communication is the preferred method of communication within the Parish Council. Telephone communication is also welcome, as is traditional post.

2. Parish Councillors must only use their Parish Council assigned email addresses when discussing matters of the Parish Council and/or responding to enquiries about the Parish Council

3. Emails are considered in the same way as a postal letter is.

- Language used should be the same as if it were in a written letter
- If preferred, a typed letter may be attached to an email
- Electronic / inserted signatures are acceptable in most cases

4. All communication (emails) sent to or from any member of the Parish Council, should also be copied to the Clerk and/or Chairman (where possible) unless directly sent to them.

- The Parish Council is one entity, if an email is directed at a single Councillor, it may be forwarded or copied to any other Parish Councillor in order to correctly respond to or handle the email.
- Those copied into an email (cc'd) are not expected to respond unless they have something of value to offer
- Emails have an environmental impact, **sending a 'thank you' email is estimated to produce over 1g of CO₂ equivalent**. Think of how many 'thank you' emails must be sent every day; that's quite an impact on climate change
- Emails will be held for a period of time, according to the PCs data retention policy.
- Enquiries may also be logged on a spreadsheet, which will be held according to the PCs data retention policy
- Councillors do not have a right to obtain confidential information/documentation unless they can demonstrate a 'need to know'

5. Receiving a response

- Emails received may not receive an immediate response
- The Parish Clerk works 13 hours per week, spread flexibly across the week and will respond when time is available
- A response should be sent within 72 hours where this is possible, but should be within a maximum of 7 days
- If an email is urgent, this should be included in the subject line, with reasons. Every effort will be made to respond promptly.
- Incoming emails should include an address and postcode if reporting something in need of repair or attention, so that the Clerk can raise a report promptly

5. Telephone communications

The Parish Council welcomes other forms of communication, including telephone calls. Calls are welcomed to the Parish Clerk, or any of the Parish Councillors. However, please note these are not full-time roles and therefore the most reliable form of communication will usually be by email. There are times when a telephone call is most appropriate, and it is nice to be able to speak with residents and work through any queries together.

Related policies and procedures

These include but are not limited to:

- Councillor Code of conduct
- Data Protection/GDPR
- Freedom of Information