

BISHOP'S CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY FOR DEALING WITH CORRESPONDENCE

Introduction

The Town Council receives correspondence daily via post, email, telephone calls and through personal visits to the Town Council office. Much of the correspondence is dealt with in the office due to the nature of the correspondence, e.g. it is not relevant to the Town Council, or is outside the remit/powers of the Town Council or it may be general correspondence such as sales literature.

Currently correspondence such as some information emails and newsletters, are forwarded to those Councillors who have email, that way a Councillor can read any information that is of interest to them or delete the email if it is not of interest. The downside to this is that Councillors without email facilities are disadvantaged.

There is regular correspondence between Councillors and office staff and currently the Town Hall renovation project team especially the project manager and architect. This correspondence is usually only circulated if requested or if it forms part of information required for a meeting.

Items of correspondence received that requires a decision to be made by the Town Council is placed onto an appropriate agenda. Correspondence regarding services or activities carried out by the Town Council or as a result of an item being on the agenda, is usually referred to at the appropriate place during the agenda and a summary of the correspondence given.

There is a need to approve a formal policy for dealing with correspondence to meet the following requirements

1. Parish Councillors must be kept informed about all relevant matters arising at Town/Parish and Unitary levels.
2. Councillors are aware of any correspondence received relating to an item to be debated.
3. Where a decision and /or action is required urgently it should be dealt with promptly.
4. To avoid a long list of correspondence to be dealt with at Town Council Meetings.
5. It is unlawful for any one member of the Town Council to deal with any matter alone.

THE POLICY

1. A correspondence list will be maintained and circulated to Councillors with agenda documents for noting. Items that are on the agenda will be marked as such where appropriate the correspondence will be summarised. A description of the contents of other correspondence will be included on the correspondence list. The clerk will be delegated authority to redact any correspondence or parts of correspondence that should be publicly withheld due to the contents being libellous, commercially sensitive or otherwise not in the public interest.

2. The correspondence list will not include day to day correspondence between Councillors or members of the project team unless the author specifically requests the correspondence is included.
3. The Council delegates to the Clerk authority, in consultation with the Mayor, to take such urgent action as they deem appropriate for time sensitive items of correspondence. Any such action will be as per the known policy of the Town Council and be reported at the next Town Council meeting.
4. Where correspondence is not time sensitive there will be no action taken without the prior approval of the Council.
5. Circulation emails containing information reports, newsletters, details of events, will continue to be circulated to Councillors via email. Councillors can request to be removed from the general circulation list. Councillors who do not have access to a computer can request a copy of the above emails if a small document, or can view larger files at the Town Council offices.