



Stapleford Abbots Parish Council

DEALING WITH ENQUIRIES FROM THE PUBLIC POLICY

Version: 1.3

June 2023

A Scope

This policy applies to the Stapleford Abbots Parish Council. Where the term ‘staff’ is used, this includes any staff (paid and voluntary) working for the Council. This policy is aimed at all Councillors and staff working for Stapleford Abbots Parish Council.

B Confidential Notice & Intellectual Property

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C Document Details

Policy	<i>Dealing with Enquiries from the Public Policy</i>
Policy Statement	<i>This document sets out a Dealing with Enquiries from the Public Policy to use by Stapleford Abbots PC</i>
Version Number	<i>1.3</i>
Version Date	<i>01/06/2023</i>
Review Date	<i>01/04/2024</i>
Author	<i>SAPC</i>
Responsible Owner	<i>Stapleford Abbots Parish Council</i>
Approving Body	<i>Stapleford Abbots Parish Council</i>

D Revision History

Version	Revision Date	Details of Changes	Author
1.1	01/06/2021	First version	B Lowings
1.2	01/06/2022	Second version	B Lowings
1.3	01/06/2023	Current version	SAPC

E Freedom of Information

If requested, this document may be made available to the public and persons outside the Council as part of Stapleford Abbots Parish Council's commitment to transparency and compliance with the Freedom of Information Act.

F Accessibility

This document can be made available in other styles, formats, sizes, languages and media in order to enable anyone who is interested in its content to have the opportunity to read and understand it. Any such requests should be made to the Clerk.

G Dissemination

This policy will be disseminated to all staff. All staff will have to read this policy at publication and every time there is an update or change to the policy. The Stapleford Abbots Parish Councillors will have the overall responsibility for implementing the policy.

H Review

This policy will be reviewed every year or when new evidence, policy or guidelines come to light necessitating an update / change. The policy review and update will be the responsibility of the Stapleford Abbots Parish Council.

1. This protocol is about dealings by Parish Council staff (hereafter referred to as 'staff') and Councillors, with members of the public on matters for which the Parish council has no direct responsibility, especially matters for which Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council are responsible.
2. Staff are employed to assist the Parish Council in providing its services and are under no duty to assist members of the public in their dealings with third parties.
3. In general the appropriate response when staff are contacted on matters for which the Parish Council has no direct responsibility is to give the members of the public contact details for the appropriate authority.
4. In general staff should not offer to contact the appropriate authority on behalf of members of the public. This can lead to inappropriate involvement by the Parish Council and also runs the risk that time will be spent in following up any contact.
5. Exceptionally a member of the public may be unwilling to give their name to a public authority and in such a case staff may at their discretion agree to pass on their comment (but not to follow it up).
6. There is however no objection to staff passing on purely factual matters such as defective street lights, potholes and overgrown hedges on verges and public rights of way. Staff should make it clear that the involvement of the Parish Council will not necessarily lead to a quicker resolution of problems.
7. Emails passing on factual information not within the remit of the Parish Council will be forwarded to the relevant principal authority.
8. Staff should be especially cautious in dealing with matters where different people could have different opinions, for example on planning or environment health matters, and especially where there is a disagreement between neighbours. It is important that the Parish Council is not seen as 'taking side' unless the Parish Council has expressed a corporate view. If there is a disagreement between neighbours emails will not be forwarded where it would amount to publication of defamatory material.
9. Staff should not take action which could be viewed as lobbying on behalf of members of the public or acting as advocates for members of the public.
10. Staff should not get involved in matters such as boundary disputes which do not involve any public authority.
11. All email correspondence from members of the public should be addressed to the Clerk and sent to the designated Parish Council email address. Any councillor who receives an email or conversation of council concern personally or to their personal email should advise the

sender to communicate directly with the clerk to ensure consistency and provide a central record for the council's action and consideration.