

Oulton Parish Council: Email and Communications Policy (2026)

1. Introduction

This policy outlines the protocols for communications between Parish Councillors, Council employees, and members of the public. Its purpose is to ensure that all communication is professional, transparent, and compliant with legal requirements including GDPR and the Freedom of Information Act.

2. Professional Conduct

- **Tone:** All correspondence must be polite, respectful, and objective.
- **Capacity:** When communicating, Councillors must make it clear whether they are speaking on behalf of the Council (having been authorized to do so) or expressing a personal opinion.
- **Public Record:** All written communication regarding Council business is potentially a public record and may be subject to public disclosure.

3. Email Protocols

- **Official Accounts:** All Council business should be conducted via official clerk@outlton-pc.gov.uk email addresses. Personal email accounts should be avoided for security and audit reasons.
- **The Clerk's Role:** The Clerk is the primary point of contact. Formal correspondence should be sent to or copied (CC'd) to the Clerk to ensure a central record is maintained.
- **Response Times:** The Council aims to acknowledge or respond to correspondence within [e.g., 5-7] working days.

4. Legal and Data Compliance

- **GDPR:** Personal data must not be shared without a legal basis. Emails containing sensitive data should be deleted once no longer required.
- **Freedom of Information (FOI):** Under the FOI Act, any email discussing Council business may be requested by the public, regardless of whether it was sent from a personal or official account.

5. Messaging Apps and Social Media

- **Messaging:** WhatsApp or SMS should be used for urgent logistical updates only and not for formal Council decision-making.

- **Social Media:** Council-managed accounts should be used only for disseminating factual information.

6. Policy Review

This policy was adopted on **21st January 2026** and will be reviewed annually.
