

County Councillor Guide to Communication & Accessibility

COUNTY COUNCILLOR GUIDE TO COMMUNICATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

The Council is committed to maintaining open and accessible communication channels and the following guidelines have been produced so that County Councillors and employees understand their responsibility to work collectively to achieve the best possible outcomes for the people we serve.

The guidelines apply to everyone and describe how our corporate commitment to open and accessible communication will be achieved. The guidelines also explain the escalation procedures within portfolios if standards are not met.

Helping us to help you

1. Email Communications

Email communication has the benefit of enabling you to complete Council related work at a time of day that best suits you. We welcome receipt of emails out of normal office hours but ask for:

- patience in allowing officers reasonable time to pick up emails and provide a response
- support in keeping information confidential by restricting circulation to only those people who need to receive it
- matters to be escalated to the portfolio contact officer to avoid unnecessary escalation to Chief Officers

2. Telephone Communications

A Who's Who of Council Services can be found on [InfoNet](#) which contains contact details, including mobile phone numbers for Chief and Senior Officers. The booklet has been provided for your personal use.

A searchable directory of all office extension numbers is available on the Council's InfoNet and will put you in touch with individual officers not listed in the Who's Who.

Your Who's Who booklet also contains a list of service specific telephone numbers, which will help you direct residents and members of the public to the right place first time.

To maximise the effectiveness of our telephone communications we would ask you to:

- refrain from sharing Chief and Senior Officer mobile telephone numbers with residents or members of the public
- be mindful of reasonable working or contact hours when using Chief and Senior Officer mobile numbers
- in the event of an emergency outside of office hours use the numbers below:
 - Housing, Highways, Streetscene and other emergencies – 01344 786590
 - Social Services - 0345 053 3116

3. Social Media

The use of social media is a very useful way to engage your communities and pass on important information relating to provision of, and changes or disruption to Council services. To help ensure the quality, accuracy and relevance of the information you provide we would ask that you:

- retweet or share official information provided on official Council social media sites
- refrain from rewording official information to minimise the risk of potential inaccuracies
- refrain from tweeting or posting during emergency situations, unless you are sharing official information

4. Support for you

The Council is committed to maintaining open and accessible communication channels with County Councillors. We encourage you to contact the most appropriate person who can help answer your enquiry e.g. Area Coordinator (Streetscene), Planning Case Officer, Housing Officer, this removes the need to escalate matters to Chief Officers unnecessarily. We have a dedicated contact officer in each portfolio to help you should you experience any unacceptable delays:

- **People and Resources**, Joanne Pierce 01352 702106
- **Governance**, Rebecca Jones 01352 702413
- **Education and Youth**, Joanna Hayes 01352 704136
- **Social Services**, Ian Maclaren 01352 702623
- **Housing & Assets**, Denise Naylor 01352 702421 or Denise Price 01352 703708
- **Streetscene & Transportation**, Vicky Plant 01352 704781
- **Planning, Environment & Economy**, Lynne Fensome 01352 704910

We ask you to report any concern over the handling of specific and important cases to either Joanne Pierce joanne.pierce@flintshire.gov.uk or Rebecca Jones rebecca.jones@flintshire.gov.uk

Our undertaking to you

We will deal with enquiries promptly and in line with published service standards. This means responses should be made within 10 working days from receipt but when enquiries are complex we will provide an explanation and a revised timescale for response. We will keep Members informed of progress when things take longer to deal with.

1. Email Communications

Signatures (desktops, laptops, tablets, iPads, BlackBerrys)

- Signatures on all email accounts must be enabled and set up so that they attach themselves to *new emails* created, *replies* to emails and emails that are *forwarded* to others.
- Signatures must be bilingual and contain the following information
 - Job title
 - Service name
 - Portfolio name
 - Council name
 - Office telephone number
 - Email address
 - Work days (where employees work part-time or condensed hours)
 - Where work issued mobile phones are used to openly engage with service users and/or members of the public, the number must also be included in email signatures.

Out of Office Messages

- Out of Office email messages must be enabled on all email accounts and activated in all instances where email will not be picked up on consecutive working days e.g. part-time or condensed hours or annual leave.
- Out of Office email messages must be created and activated to respond to both internal and external contacts.
- Out of Office email messages must be bilingual and include the following information:
 - The dates between which you will not be picking up emails
 - Alternative contact details

Response Times

- Emails should be acknowledged within 5 working days
- Digital responses should be provided as quickly as possible but within 10 working days

- Responses must be in the language and format of the original communication.

2. Skype for Business

Availability notifications

- Skype for Business uses information from Outlook Calendar to identify availability. To maximise its effectiveness Outlook Calendars should be used to record all diary entries, including annual leave.

Profile Photos

- Except in situations where service procedures dictate otherwise employees should make every effort to upload an appropriate photo to their Outlook/Skype account.
- Where employees' have a high level of contact with Councillors/Chief Officers they should be encouraged by Managers to upload appropriate photos.
- Profile photos are only visible to internal colleagues. Where used it should be an image of the employee. ID badge photos may be used or an appropriate alternative that reflects the professionalism of the service.

3. Telephone Communications

Telephone answering standards

- Calls should be answered within 30 seconds.
- Calls must be dealt with in English or Welsh, with appropriate arrangements put in place where Welsh speaking employees are unavailable.
- Where additional requirements are needed, alternative systems (e.g. language translation services) must be offered.

Diverting telephone calls to appropriate workplaces/devices

- Except in situations where service procedures dictate otherwise, when working away from usual places of work, telephone calls must be diverted to an appropriate alternative e.g. agile workstation; home; mobile phone; another extension; voicemail.
- Where employees do not subscribe to voicemail, calls must be diverted to an another appropriate number

Diverting telephone calls to voicemail

- Except in situations where service procedures dictate otherwise, voicemail services must be enabled and activated in all instances where calls will not be picked up on consecutive working days e.g. part-time or condensed hours or annual leave.
- For short periods of absence (1 day) and everyday use (e.g. meetings) a Personal Greeting should be recorded that will be played to all callers both internal and external to the organisation.
- For longer periods of absence e.g. annual leave an Extended Absence greeting must be recorded which will include an expiry date (the date and time of return) and an alternative contact. On return to work the system will automatically revert back to the Personal Greeting.
- Voicemail messages should be regularly accessed either at a workstation or remotely and dealt with accordingly.

Publishing Mobile Telephone Numbers

- Where work issued mobile phones are used to openly engage with service users and/or members of the public, the number should also be:
 - included in the internal telephone directory (available on InfoNet)
 - accompany relevant officer details in the Who's Who (available on InfoNet)
 - incorporated into Email signatures

4. Who's Who of Council Services

- Managers will be expected to actively support an up-to-date and relevant internal Who's Who of Council Services.
- Criteria for inclusion in the Who's Who will be based on an employees' level of contact with Councillors/Chief Officers and not necessarily service hierarchy.
- The Who's Who should contain the following information:
 - Photo
 - Name
 - Job title
 - Service name
 - Portfolio name
 - Office telephone number
 - Email address
 - Brief bullet point summary of services delivered
 - Where work issued mobile phones are used to openly engage with service users and/or members of the public, the number should also be included in the on-line Who's Who.

5. Complaints

- All complaints must be recorded and wherever possible resolved straight away.
- Where it is not possible to resolve a complaint straight away it should be formally acknowledged within 5 working days.
- We will aim to provide a full response within 10 working days from receipt.
- Where a complaint is complex and may take longer than 10 working days to resolve regular updates will be provided.

6. Monitoring compliance

- All employees in a managerial or supervisory role will be responsible for ensuring compliance with these minimum standards.
- Reports of non-compliance can be emailed to rebecca.jones@flintshire.gov.uk
- Regular reports of non-compliance will be presented to Chief Officer Team for consideration and appropriate action.

Please refer to the *County Councillor Communications and Accessibility – How to guidance* for help and support on setting up and managing the systems and tools referred to above.