

Colburn Hipswell & Scotton Joint Burial Authority

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

This policy sets out to define the roles and responsibilities within the Burial Board regarding communications and guidance on how the Burial Board conducts business.

Emails

Emails received by the Burial Board Clerk or Members may be disclosed following a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, a subject access request under the Data Protection Act 1998 or in the course of legal proceedings.

All emails should be sent to the Burial Board's email address as the Clerk is the point of contact and will take matters forward.

All correspondence and information are collectively owned by the Burial Board and can be used at meetings or working party meetings. Confidential documentation must be respected and effectively disposed of after meetings.

Key Points

When writing any communication, it should be assumed that it may have to be disclosed to a court, tribunal or to the Information Commission.

Any communication should be relevant and concise. Do not send unnecessary copies or forward messages to others if not strictly necessary.

Always write emails as if they are permanent, because even when they have been deleted they can often still be retrieved and may be disclosable to a court or the information commissioner.

Information in communication may not be confidential, but may be sensitive information that needs to be respected.

Always respect the privacy of others.

Do not write anything in communications that might be construed as offensive or discriminatory.

Do not make negative comments about an individual, including members of the public, members, officers, or business suppliers.

Decisions made at a Burial Board meeting which are minuted are communicated by the clerk in a written email to the parties concerned.

The Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting.

The point of contact for the Burial Board is the Clerk, and it is to the Clerk that all correspondence for the Burial Board should be addressed.

Agenda items for Burial Board Meeting & Working Groups

Agendas should be clear and concise. They should contain sufficient information to enable members to make an informed decision, and for the public to understand what matters are being considered and what decisions will be taken at a meeting. All financial decisions must be shown as an agenda item.

Items for information are not a formal part of the agenda and decisions cannot be made on any points raised.

Items for information should be kept to a minimum on an agenda.

Media matters

The Clerk is the first point of contact for the media. Approaches from the media should be referred to the Burial Board Clerk. Individual members are not permitted to issue media releases on behalf of the Burial Board.

The purpose of a press release is to make the media aware of a potential story, to provide important public information or to explain the Burial Board's position on a particular issue. The Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, is responsible for issuing formal press releases on behalf of the Burial Board.

Reactive press releases may be prepared and issued in response to a specific question or as a rebuttal to an article already published. Such statements should be dealt with in a timely manner.

Confidential matters, including items discussed at meetings where the press and public have been excluded, must not be divulged.

Burial Board members and the Clerk should always have due regard for the long-term reputation of the Burial Board in all their dealings with the media.

Communications with Burial Board Staff

No individual member, regardless of whether or not they are Chair of the Burial Board, the Chair of a working group, may give instructions to the Clerk or to another employee which are inconsistent or conflict with Burial Board decisions or arrangements for delegated powers.

Telephone calls should be appropriate to the work of the Burial Board.

Instant replies from Emails to the Clerk should not be expected; reasons for urgency should be stated; Information to members should normally be directed via the Clerk; Emails from members to external parties should be copied to the Clerk; Members should acknowledge their emails when requested to do so.