



Radyr & Morganstown Community Council

Cyngor Cymuned Radur a Threforgan

E-mail Policy

Introduction

This policy is intended to guide the way that e-mails are used by Radyr and Morganstown Community Council councillors, in the conduct of council business.

The main purposes of the policy include:

- to ensure that e-mails between councillors are courteous and professional
- to reduce the number of e-mails sent to the minimum possible.

In this document:

- 'councillors' is taken to include council staff
- 'council meetings' are taken to mean meetings of the full council, one of the council's sub-committees, or an informal working group established by the council.

General principles

As a rule, discussions between councillors should take place in council meetings (including in sub-committee meetings). Decisions should be taken during those meetings - and the nature of those decisions recorded as clearly as possible.

By operating in this way, the practice of seeking to discuss and agree issues via e-mail should be curtailed.

Inevitably, however, issues will arise between meetings, which may lead to an exchange of e-mails (for instance, seeking views on a planning matter where the deadline for comments predates the next council meeting). In such cases, an exchange of e-mails between councillors may be unavoidable.

Complex issues, with several options to be considered - and where councillors may have differing views, cannot easily or sensibly dealt with in an exchange of e-mail correspondence. Those issues should be dealt with in council meetings.

Policy guidance

A) Keeping e-mails to a minimum

- councillors should always seek to minimise the number of e-mails they send to other councillors.
- in general, e-mails should be sent only to the Council's clerk. The Clerk will discuss those e-mails with the Council's Chair to decide how best to deal with them
- an exception to this, however, may be the need for the Chair, Vice-Chair and Committee Chairs to communicate with each other
- e-mails should be kept as short as possible.
- the practice of copying emails to every councillor should not be used as a default. Not every councillor will need to see, or want to see, every email. Councillors should carefully consider who needs to see each e-mail. This is not to be interpreted as some councillors being sidelined. Rather, it is to recognise that different councillors have different responsibilities and interests - and may not wish to see e-mails dealing with matters that do not fall within their remit or interest area. In any case, at the end of the day, key decisions will be made, as appropriate, in council meetings.
- a long series of e-mails, from a single councillor, setting out views on a particular subject should be avoided whenever possible. Rather, each councillor should take time and care, to assemble in one e-mail the points they wish to make.
- e-mails simply thanking other councillors for their e-mails should not be sent.
- any councillor asking to be excluded from an ongoing exchange of e-mails should have his or her request honoured.

B) Clarity

- the content of e-mails should be clear and unambiguous. Councillors should make sure that the content of each e-mail is as precise as possible. Doing so can avoid others misunderstanding e-mails, or responding with questions arising from a lack of clarity in the original email. Councillors should take a small amount of time to read through each e-mail before sending it.
- Councillors should seek to put their main points at the beginning of any email, this can avoid misinterpretations and ensure recipients are focused on the correct issues as they read the remainder of the e-mail.
- Councillors should ensure that their contact information (including a telephone number) is included in the signature line of the e-mails they send.
- Councillors should avoid dealing with more than one subject in an e-mail. It is more effective to send separate e-mails for separate subjects. This practice is also helpful for councillors who wish to file e-mails.

C) Tone

- e-mails between councillors should always be courteous and professional.
- a respectful tone should always be used in e-mails, whilst also recognising that councillors may have differing views - and that those views should be respected, even if disagreed with.
- e-mails should avoid emotional, controversial, argumentative and potentially insulting language.

D) Policy continuity

- e-mails must not seek to alter council policies or decisions, or re-open issues dealt with in council meetings. Any proposal to alter council policies or decisions should be discussed at a future council meeting, with the agreement of the Chair or Vice Chair.

E) E-mails prior to meetings

- if a councillor is unable to attend a council meeting, but wishes to present his or her views to the meeting, that councillor should send an e-mail to the meeting's chair only (with a copy to the clerk) setting out those views. The chair can then present those views to the meeting.
- if a councillor can attend a meeting, then he or she should avoid sending their views via an e-mail to other councillors also due to attend the meeting, prior to the meeting. Rather, the councillor should wait to present their views verbally, at the meeting.

F) Personal allegations

- any e-mails commenting on the behaviour of other councillors should be sent only to the chair and clerk, never to other councillors.
- any allegations of bullying, acting in an undemocratic manner, promoting personal views as the council's views, insulting others, being libellous, or similar issues, should be sent only to the chair and clerk, never to other councillors.
- these issues would constitute serious allegations and would be dealt with accordingly.

G) Offensive content

- e-mails should not include any inappropriate, offensive or illegal content.

H) FoI

- councillors should bear in mind that emails are foI-able.

Non-compliance

Councillors are expected to comply with this e-mail policy.

Any councillor who persistently fails to follow this policy may be subject to the council's disciplinary procedures. In addition, the chair may explain to other councillors that they need not open that councillor's e-mails until further notice.

Councillors who fail to follow a policy item relating to tone, personal allegations or offensive content could be subject to the council's disciplinary procedures following the issue by them of only one e-mail that contravenes that policy. Again, the chair may explain to other councillors that they need not open that councillor's e-mails until further notice.