



Yatton Parish Council

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OUR MISSION: To ensure the provision of high quality services in our communities of Yatton and Claverham

PROTOCOL ON DEALINGS BY PARISH COUNCIL STAFF WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

**(adopted by Yatton Parish Council on 11 November 2013, re-adopted 9
October 2017, 14 June 2021, 14 April 2025. Review April 2029)**

1. This protocol is about dealings by Parish Council staff ('staff') with members of the public on matters for which the Parish Council has no direct responsibility, especially matters for which North Somerset Council is 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. However as the Parish Council has an office in the parish, and North Somerset Council does not, staff will inevitably be approached by members of the public in connection with matters for which the Parish Council has no direct responsibility.
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 member 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 comments (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 should be dealt with in the same way as phone calls or personal contact and should not normally be forwarded.

8. Staff should be especially cautious in dealing with matters where different people could have different opinions, for example on planning or environmental health matters, and especially where there is a disagreement between neighbours. It is important that the Parish Council is not seen as 'taking sides' unless the Parish Council has expressed a corporate view. In addition there is the risk that forwarding emails where there is a disagreement between neighbours 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.