

Guidance for Councillors on email signatures and email communications

Purpose of the guidance

Email is the predominant form of communication for Councillors. In most cases, no problems will arise from this form of communication, but it is important to bear in mind that, whilst it can be an informal means of communication, you should ensure that any Council emails maintain an appropriate level of formality and are not open to misinterpretation.

Councillors may hold a number of different roles within the community, and this can create scope for confusion as to the capacity in which they are sending emails. Following this guidance should ensure that there is no risk of confusion and that emails relating to Council business are clearly identified as such.

Guidance

1. Councillors may refer to their Borough Ward Councillor status and any other relevant council appointments (including membership of other councils) in their Council email signatures dependent on the nature and relevance of the correspondence. To avoid the risk of confusion, non-Council roles (such as membership of residents' associations, companies, or other organisations to which they are appointed in their personal capacity) should not be included in email signatures or on paper correspondence.
2. Councillors should only use their Guildford Borough Council email address for Council business. The only exception to this is that Councillors who are also Parish Councillors may use their GBC email address where the matter they are dealing with concerns both Borough and Parish Council business as long as the email clearly identifies the separation between the two roles.
3. Councillors should not use personal email addresses for Council business. This is to protect the security of the data contained within the emails. In addition, the information contained in the email may need to be disclosed as part of a data protection subject access request or a freedom of information request and therefore needs to be available on the Council's systems for this purpose. Any email relating to Council business received on a councillor's personal email account, must be forwarded to the councillor's Council email address, and deleted from their personal email account. Councillors must not send confidential or 'part 2' council documents to their personal email address or to members of the public.
4. In drafting emails, councillors should avoid using ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, as they can be construed as shouting.
5. When responding to an email sent to many recipients, councillors should consider whether 'Reply All' is appropriate.

Creating an email signature

To create an email signature, open a new email. Select Signature > Signatures. Under Select signatures to edit, select New. Type your chosen name for the signature in the box that appears. Type your chosen signature in the Edit signature box and save it.

Example signature

The following wording is suggested as a template signature.

Name

Councillor for [Ward]

Council appointments (Optional)

Member of Political Group (optional)

Guildford Borough Council

Millmead House, Millmead, Guildford, GU2 4BB

Telephone no: