



Municipality of the County of Kings

Communications

Policy Category	Communications	Most Recent Amendment	-
First Council Approval	April 5, 2022	Future Review Date	April 2025

1. Purpose

The Municipality of the County of Kings (Municipality) supports clear, effective, timely, and consistent communication. This Policy establishes standards to ensure that communications with residents, stakeholders, Council, and employees reflect the values of the Municipality, and is efficient, responsive, and human-focused.

This Policy establishes the principles that will direct all Communications, and provides specific direction and standards for a variety of communications-related activities.

This Policy provides direction to Council and employees to ensure, at all times, the Municipality:

- Provides clear, accurate and timely information about its programs, services, and initiatives to the community.
- Uses a variety of communication methods to engage and provide access to local government information in formats that respond to the community’s needs.
- Is visible, accessible, and accountable to citizens.
- Makes clear and timely messaging available in response to emergencies or crises.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all internal and external communications of the Municipality, and applies to all Members of Council and employees.

3. Definitions

3.1 **Authorized Person:** an employee appointed by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to interact with media or represent the Municipality.

3.2 **Corporate Communication(s):** the variety of ways the Municipality, as a government body, communicates with external and internal audiences.

3.3 **Social Media:** websites and digital applications that enable users to create, share, and interact with content online, or to participate in social networking.

4. Policy Statements

Values & Guiding Principles

4.1 In all communications, the values of the Strategic Plan shall be embodied and reflected.

- 4.2 All communications shall reflect and promote inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility.

Communications shall be correct, concise, accessible, gender neutral, and non-discriminatory. Communications shall exclude words and images that connote stereotypes, exclude any negative or passive language relating to physical appearances, and exclude clichés, slang, and jargon.

- 4.3 Communications shall use plain language and a variety of methods as a means to be inclusive and responsive to the needs of target audiences.

- 4.4 In all matters, clarity and timeliness of communications shall be observed.

Brand Usage

- 4.5 Corporate communications shall make use of the Municipality's brand and brand standards as appropriate and in accordance with the brand adopted by Council. Usage of the Municipality's brand outside of corporate communications shall be at the discretion of the Chief Administrative Officer.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

- 4.6 In all communications, the Municipality, Members of Council, and employees shall be subject to applicable Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation.

Communications Strategy

- 4.7 The Municipality shall develop a Communications Strategy to be reviewed every two years after adoption and amended as necessary. The Strategy shall include measurable outcomes related to both external and internal communications and propose actions that respond to evolving needs of audiences, emerging trends, and proven practices. In all regards, the Communications Strategy shall embody the values identified in the Municipality's Strategic Plan.

Communications Support Provided to the Mayor

- 4.8 In their capacity as the spokesperson for Council, the Municipality may provide communications support to the Mayor, if required. Such assistance may include, but is not limited to: speaking notes for public appearances or events, scripts or research notes for media interviews, and key messages for media requests or emergency situations.

Considerations for all Communications from Members of Council

- 4.9 In all communications from Members of Council, including the use of social media, the following shall be considered:
- Obligations under Council's Code of Conduct;
 - Obligations under Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation;
 - The accuracy of information provided;
 - If the communication could bring about disrepute to or expose the Municipality to legal action;
 - Whether the subject or position on a matter is enabled or prohibited by a law, or By-law or Policy of the Municipality;
 - Whether the communication reflects the values of the Strategic Plan; and
 - Whether Council has taken a particular position, by way of a motion, on the topic.

- 4.10 Individual members of Council are encouraged to reflect the position of Council in their communications, or state they are providing a personal opinion. Where an individual Member of Council expresses a personal opinion, whether written or verbal, it must be explicitly clear to the audience that the Member is not speaking on behalf of the Municipality or Council. Accordingly, when a Member of Council is communicating as an individual, they may include the following statement in written correspondence:

The information contained in this correspondence reflects the views of an individual Member of Council, and not those of Council as a whole or the Municipality of the County of Kings.

Communications from Councillors Serving as Committee Chairs

General

- 4.11 With respect to communicating the business of Committees of Council, the Members of Council serving as Chair shall refer to and be bound by Policy ADMIN-01-016: Administration of Standing and Advisory Committees of Council.

Reports to Council

- 4.12 It shall be the responsibility of the Chair of the Committee to verify, if required, the accuracy of information being communicated to Council with the Chief Administrative Officer.

Representation at Events

- 4.13 Chairs may, at the request of the Mayor, represent the Municipality at Municipally-hosted events or at events where the Municipality has been asked to participate. In such circumstances, the Chair's communications shall reflect the position adopted or endorsed by Council.

Written Correspondence from Members of Council

- 4.14 The Municipality shall make available personalized letterhead for each Member of Council to use at their discretion.
- 4.15 Following circulation of formal written correspondence, Members of Council shall provide a copy of the correspondence to the CAO. This shall include copies of letters of support or commendation, or responses to community issues, but exclude emails, social media posts, or routine correspondence with constituents.

Social Media Use by Council Members

- 4.16 The Municipality shall not provide administrative support to the social media accounts of Members of Council.

Media Inquiries Received by Members of Council

- 4.17 Councillors shall refer all media inquiries to the Mayor and Chief Administrative Officer for direction and assistance.
- 4.18 The Mayor shall be the default spokesperson for all media inquiries regarding Council matters, unless another Member of Council is designated to respond to a particular matter.
- 4.19 The Municipality will endeavour at every possible chance to have Members of Council to respond to and engage with media inquiries on District-specific matters.

Corporate Communications

- 4.20 The Municipality shall maintain a website to provide the public with information regarding municipal services, Council decisions, Council and committee meeting schedules, minutes and agendas, By-laws, Policies, activities, events, and ongoing government business.
- 4.21 The Chief Administrative Officer shall be the official spokesperson for matters related to the administration of the Municipality. All media inquiries shall be referred to them for direction.

If authorized by the CAO, an employee may serve as the designated spokesperson for matters relating to their position, skills, and expertise.

Social Media Use by the Municipality and Employees

- 4.22 Only authorized persons may write in the voice of the Municipality on social media.
- 4.23 All social media platforms and activities must be reflective of the Municipality's values and will continually strive to protect the organization's credibility and meet the information needs of citizens.
- 4.24 The CAO, or their designate, shall be responsible for managing the primary social media channels representing the Municipality as a corporation.

All social media content shall require approval by the CAO, or their designate, prior to publication.

- 4.25 The Municipality may establish standards and guidelines for commenting and engagement with its social media content that include, but are not limited to:
- Responding to posts or comments;
 - Moderating discussions;
 - When posts or comments may be removed, such as instances of:
 - Racist, hateful, sexist, homophobic, slanderous, insulting, or threatening language;
 - Aggressive, coarse, violent, obscene, or pornographic content;
 - Offensive or threatening comments directed at an individual or an organization;
 - Content posted for the sake of advertising or self-promotion;
 - Unintelligible, repetitive, or spam content;
 - Are in any way contrary to law.

- 4.26 Employees shall remain mindful of their obligations under the Employee Conduct Policy and Code of Ethics Policy when sharing content on social media.

Emergency Communications

- 4.27 In times of emergency or crisis, the Municipality shall communicate any and all information that will protect the health, safety, security, residents and their property. Communications decisions shall be made by the Kings Regional Emergency Management Organization.

Communications will take any form necessary to ensure residents receive accurate, timely, and relevant information to prevent, mitigate, respond to, or recover from an emergency.

5. Responsibilities

- 5.1 Council will:
 - 5.1.1 ensure the Municipality has a current and comprehensive Policy for communications; and
 - 5.1.2 review and amend this Policy as required.
- 5.2 The Chief Administrative Officer:
 - 5.2.1 will implement this Policy;
 - 5.2.2 will identify and propose revisions to this Policy; and
 - 5.2.3 may delegate their authority.

6. Amendments

Date	Amendments
April 5, 2022	Policy Created.