

	Policy Title: Respectful Correspondence Policy	Policy No: CO-028
	Authority: Council	Classification: 0340-40
	Date Adopted: June 23, 2025	Motion No: IC-2025-86
Historical Changes: N/A		

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to ensure respectful, civil, and constructive communication between members of the public and the District of Sooke Council and staff. It establishes clear expectations and procedures for responding to inappropriate correspondence, in alignment with best practices and legislative obligations.
- 1.2. This Policy will be administered in accordance with applicable legislation, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the British Columbia Human Rights Code.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. In this Policy, unless the context otherwise requires:

Council	means the Council of the District of Sooke.
Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)	means the position of the District's Chief Administrative Officer.
Corporate Officer	means the District's Corporate Officer that has been designated the corporate officer under section 148 of the Community Charter.
Council	means the duly elected officials of the District, those being the Mayor and Councillors
District	means the District of Sooke
Inappropriate Correspondence	includes written, electronic, telephone, or in-person communication that: • A reasonable person would consider abusive, threatening, discriminatory, defamatory, or harassing; • Is intended to intimidate, humiliate, or offend; • Is repetitive, vexatious, or malicious in nature; • Violates the standards of respectful discourse in a public service environment.
Incident	means any occurrence involving one or more individuals engaging in Inappropriate Communication.
Incident Report	means a written record, created by Staff, containing relevant details of an alleged Incident.
Member(s)	means the Mayor or a Councillor

Supervisor	means a person employed by the District as a Manager or Director of the relevant department of the involved division or department of the District.
Staff	means a person employed by the District, and includes volunteers authorized to act on behalf of the District
Workplace	means any location where a District employee performs work-related duties. This includes, but is not limited to, District-owned or leased properties, off-site locations where District business is conducted, and remote work environments.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1. This Policy applies to all persons, including members of the public, when they are communicating with Staff and Council Members in the Workplace.
- 3.2. This Policy does not apply to communication solely between District Staff or between District Staff and Council Members.
- 3.3. Nothing in this Policy is intended to replace, supersede, or impact the District's Respectful Workplace Policy.
- 3.4. Nothing in the Policy limits the District's right to pursue other remedies available by law, including injunctions.

4. POLICY

- 4.1. All persons engaging with District staff or Council must communicate in a courteous, civil, and respectful manner.
- 4.2. No person shall engage in Inappropriate Communication with Staff or Council Members.
- 4.3. The District is authorized to implement communication limits, including restricting the method, frequency, and recipient of correspondence, in response to repeated or severe violations of this policy.
- 4.4. Responses to Inappropriate Correspondence will follow a procedural framework designed to ensure proportionality, documentation, and transparency.
- 4.5. The District maintains the right to decline to respond to correspondence that is deemed to violate the standards outlined in this policy.

5. PROCEDURE

Staff Receiving Inappropriate Correspondence

- 5.1. If staff believe they have received Inappropriate Communication, they will prepare an Incident Report detailing the Incident. Staff must submit the Incident Report to their supervisor. Where the Incident is limited to written or electronic communication, a copy of any written or electronic communication must be included with the Incident Report.

- 5.2. If, upon receipt and review of an Incident Report, the supervisor determines the Incident could be in violation of this Policy, they will notify the CAO and provide the CAO with the Incident Report.
- 5.3. When the CAO receives an Incident Report, they will take such action as they consider appropriate in the circumstances, considering the following guidelines:
 - a) Whether the Inappropriate Communication concerned a matter for which the author of the communication had a statutory right to be heard;
 - b) Role of the individual to whom the Inappropriate Communication was directed;
 - c) Whether the Inappropriate Communication relates to comments and feedback regarding a program, service, or initiative of the District;
 - d) Whether the Inappropriate Communication is violent, threatening, defamatory of an individual, or discriminatory;
 - e) Whether the Inappropriate Communication was a single or repeated act;
 - f) Whether the person has acknowledged wrongdoing or apologized for the Inappropriate Communication;
 - g) Whether the person had received previous warnings or actions from the District regarding Inappropriate Communication; and
 - h) any other relevant consideration.
- 5.4. The CAO may determine that the Incident did not constitute a violation of this Policy and take no further action.
- 5.5. The CAO may determine that the Incident did constitute a violation of this Policy but decide that no further action is required in the circumstances.
- 5.6. The CAO may determine that the Incident did constitute a violation of this Policy and take one or more of the following steps
 - a) Issue a written warning letter to the person who engaged in Inappropriate Communication;
 - b) Request that the person who engaged in Inappropriate Communication meet with a Staff member;
 - c) Restrict how an individual communicates with staff, including limiting the method, timing, duration, or directing all communication through a designated staff member;
 - d) Instruct Staff not to acknowledge, respond to, and/or publish future communications from the person engaging in Inappropriate Communication; and
 - e) Any other action the CAO considers appropriate in the circumstances.

6. PROCEDURE

Council Members Receiving Inappropriate Correspondence

- 6.1. If a Council Member receives Inappropriate Communication, they may exercise their discretion to bring it to the attention of Council.
- 6.2. If the Inappropriate Communication received by a Council Member is also sent to and/or received by Staff, the procedures set out in the previous section will apply.

- 6.3. When Council receives notice of Inappropriate Communications to a Council Member, they may take such action as the they consider appropriate in the circumstances considering the following guidelines:
- a) Whether the Inappropriate Communication concerned a matter for which the author of the communication had a statutory right to be heard;
 - b) Role of the individual to whom the Inappropriate Communication was directed;
 - c) Whether the Inappropriate Communication relates to comments and feedback regarding a program, service, or initiative of the District;
 - d) Whether the Inappropriate Communication is violent, threatening, defamatory of an individual, or discriminatory;
 - e) Whether the Inappropriate Communication was a single or repeated act;
 - f) Whether the person has acknowledged wrongdoing or apologized for the Inappropriate Communication;
 - g) Whether the person had received previous warnings or actions from the District regarding Inappropriate Communication; and
 - h) any other relevant consideration.
- 6.4. Council may determine that the Incident did not constitute a violation of this Policy and take no further action.
- 6.5. Council may determine that the Incident did constitute a violation of this Policy but decide that no further action is required in the circumstances.
- 6.6. Council may determine that the Incident did constitute a violation of this Policy and direct the CAO to take one or more of the following steps:
- a) Issue a written warning letter to the person who engaged in Inappropriate Communication;
 - b) Request that the person who engaged in Inappropriate Communication meet with a Staff member;
 - c) Restrict how an individual communicates with staff, including limiting the method, timing, duration, or directing all communication through a designated staff member;
 - d) Instruct Staff not to acknowledge, respond to, and/or publish future communications from the person engaging in Inappropriate Communication; and
 - e) Any other action Council considers appropriate in the circumstances.
- 6.7. Nothing in this Policy is intended to limit a Council Member's ability to respond to communication received from the public.

REFERENCES

Policy Owner:	Corporate Services
Related Policies:	Policy 7.11 Respectful Workplace Policy