



SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

The use of digital, social media and electronic communication enables the Parish Council to interact in a way that improves the communications both within the Council and between the Council and the people, businesses, and agencies it works with and serves.

The Parish Council has a website and Facebook page for the Council and the Village Hall, and uses email to communicate. The Parish Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time the Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur, this Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

The Parish Council and Village Hall Facebook pages intend to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our parish and promote our community positively.

Posts made representing the Parish Council on the Parish Council and Village Hall Facebook pages will be limited to designated Officers and Councillors. This does not restrict Councillors or the public making their own posts to the site.

Communications from the Parish Council will meet the following criteria:

- Be civil, tasteful, and relevant
- Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented, or racially offensive
- Not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright. However, information will be posted at the request of groups where they provide their written permission
- Not contain any personal information
- Official Council business will be moderated by either the Chairman, Vice Chairman, or the Parish Council Manager / Assistant manager
- Will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising
- Will not include comments or views about sensitive community topics, such as planning applications

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives, the following guidelines are to be adhered to:

- Be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarity, threats or abusive language will not be tolerated.
- Differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including the Council members or staff, will not be permitted.
- Share freely and be generous with official Council posts but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.
- Stay on topic.
- Refrain from using the Parish Council Facebook page for commercial purposes or to advertise, market or sell products. However, the Village Hall Facebook page may be used to promote availability to hirers.

The site is not monitored 24/7 and we will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, the Parish Council will endeavour to ensure that any emerging

themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people or authorities. Please do not include personal/private information in your social media posts to us.

Sending a message/post via Facebook will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and we will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through these channels. Instead, please make direct contact with Parish Council Manager by email.

We retain the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- Obscene, racist or discriminatory content
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language
- Potentially libellous statements.
- Plagiarised material; any material in violation of any laws, including copyright
- Private, personal information published without consent
- Information or links unrelated to the content of the forum
- Commercial promotions or spam
- Anything that is alleged in breach of Parish Council policy or the law

The Parish Council's response to any communication received not meeting the above criteria will be either to ignore it, inform the sender of our policy or send a brief response as appropriate. This will be at the Parish Council's discretion based on the message received, given our limited resources available. Any information posted on the Facebook page not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. Repeat offenders will be blocked from the Facebook page. The Council may post a statement that 'A post breaching the Council's Social Media Policy has been removed'. If the post alleges a breach of a Parish Council policy or the law, the person who posted it will be asked to submit a formal complaint to the Council or report the matter to the Police as soon as possible to allow due process.

Non-Parish Council social media sites

Where issues arise that are discussed on other social media sites with regard to Parish Council business, these would be referred to the Parish Council office for consideration and response on the Parish Council Social media page.

Parish/Town Council Website

Where necessary, we may direct those contacting us to our website to see the required information, or we may forward their question to the Parish Council for consideration and response at their monthly meeting.

The Parish Council may, at its discretion, allow and enable approved local groups to have and maintain a presence on its website for the purpose of presenting information about the group's activities on the Clubs and Societies' Page. The local group would be responsible for maintaining the content and ensuring that it meets the Parish Council's 'rules and expectation' for the web site. The Parish Council reserves the right to remove any or all of a local group's information from the web site if it feels that the content does not meet the Parish Council's 'rules and expectation' for its website. Where groups request the Parish Council to publish their contact details, they will be required to complete a data consent form in line with the General Data Protection Regulations

Parish/Town Council email

The Parish Council email accounts are monitored during office hours, Monday to Friday, and it is aimed to reply to all queries as soon as possible. The Parish Council Manager and Assistant Manager are responsible for dealing with emails received and passing on any relevant mail to members or external agencies for information and/or action. All communications on behalf of the Council will

usually come from the Parish Council Manager or Assistant Manager. All new emails requiring data to be passed on, will be followed up with a Data Consent Form for completion before action is taken with that correspondence. Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views, if appropriate, with a copy to the Parish Council Manager. All email correspondence from Councillors will be subject to the Freedom of Information

Act. These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept. Do not forward personal information on to other people or groups outside of the Parish Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses.

SMS (texting)

Members and the Parish Council Manager/Assistant Manager may use SMS as a convenient way to communicate at times. All are reminded that this policy also applies to such messages.

Video Conferencing

If this medium is used to communicate please note that this policy also applies to the use of video conferencing.

Internal communication and access to information within the Parish Council

The Parish Council is continually looking at ways to improve its working and the use of social media and electronic communications is a major factor in delivering improvement.

Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act in all their work on behalf of the Council.

As more and more information becomes available at the press of a button, it is vital that all information is treated sensitively and securely. Councillors are expected to maintain an awareness of the confidentiality of information that they have access to and not to share confidential information with anyone. Failure to properly observe confidentiality may be seen as a breach of the Parish Council's Code of Conduct and will be dealt with through its prescribed procedures (at the extreme it may also involve a criminal investigation). Members should also be careful only to cc essential recipients on emails i.e. to avoid use of the 'Reply to All' option if at all possible, but of course copying in all who need to know and ensuring that email trails have been removed.

Recruitment

Social Media may be used as part of the recruitment process, ie internet searches on candidates, and is included in our privacy notices.

Signature.....Chairman of the Parish Council

Meeting REview Date 11th December 2025