



SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

DATE & MEETING IMPLEMENTED	FULL COUNCIL 19 April 2022
DATE OF REVIEW	May 2025
SIGNED	Cllr Pegg, Chairman

Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables the Town 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 Council has a website, Facebook page and uses email to communicate. The 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 Council Facebook pages and any future additional forms of social media communication intends to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our Town and promote our community positively.

Communications from the Council will meet the following criteria:

- Be relevant to council and/or town business only, where that can include relevant material supplied from Borough, County, Regional and/or National bodies.
- Be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- Exclude content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- Exclude content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright
- Exclude all personal information about council members, council staff or members of the public.
- Exclude all personal opinion of council members, council staff or residents.
- Exclude the dissemination of all materials promoting political events and all material supporting any political bodies.

As it is official Council business, it will be moderated by either the Clerk or Deputy Clerk to the Council

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives, we ask you to follow these guidelines:

- 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 Council's Facebook page for commercial purposes or to sell products.

The site is not monitored 24/7 and the Council will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, the 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 social media will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and the Council will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests

for information through these channels. Instead, please make direct contact with the council's Clerk and/or members of the council by email.

The Council retains the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- Obscene or racist 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
- Allegations of a breach of a Council's policy or the law

At all times the Council will try to adhere to all aspects of GDPR in relation to communications received from members of the public, and posts will be anonymised wherever possible. This means, it is essential that the Council retains some level of editorial privilege on all material sent to the Council for posting on the Council website and other Council managed media platforms and notice boards, to protect the anonymity of members of the public.

The Council makes no commitment to publish every posting it receives from the public and other sources. The volume of items posted depends entirely on the availability of Council staff and compliance with publishing policy.

The Council's response to any communication that does not meet the above criteria will be to either ignore, inform the sender of the Council's policy or send a brief response as appropriate. This will be at the Council's discretion based on the message received, and resources available. Any information posted on the Facebook page not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible.

Town Council Website.

Where necessary, the Council may direct those contacting us to the Council's website to see the required information. In some cases officers may forward a question to one of the Councillors for consideration and response. There is no promise that it will be possible to respond to every comment received particularly when experiencing a heavy workload.

The 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 contravenes the Council's 'rules and expectations. Where content on the website related to a local group it should be clearly marked that such content is not the direct responsibility of the Council and that it has been supplied by a known local group.

Town Council Facebook Page

The Council Facebook page will be used only official Council business and generally 'comments' will be switched off, unless there is a good reason to invite comments via the Facebook page.

Town Council email

The Clerk and Officers of the council each have their own council email addresses.

The email accounts are monitored mainly during office hours, Monday to Friday, and we aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as we can. An 'out of office' message should be used when appropriate.

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with email 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 Clerk or Deputy and/or otherwise will always be copied to the Clerk. All new Emails requiring data to be forwarded to the relevant interested party, 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 through their council email address in relation to council matters, and if appropriate, copy these to the Clerk.

These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

Staff/ Councillors should not forward personal information on to other people or groups outside of the Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

SMS (texting)

Councillors, the Clerk, and the Council staff may use SMS as a convenient way to communicate at times. All are reminded that this policy also applies to such messages.

Video Conferencing e.g. Skype, Teams, Zoom, Webex

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

Internal communication and access to information within the Council

The Council is continuously looking at ways to improve its ways of working and the use of social media and electronic communications are major factors in delivering improvement.

Councillors and staff are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and the General Data Protection Regulations 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 and staff are expected to maintain an awareness of the confidentiality of information to which they have access and avoid sharing confidential information with anyone. Failure to observe confidentiality properly may be a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct or staff disciplinary policy 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, but of course copying in all who need to know and ensuring that email trails have been removed as applicable.

ROLES

Clerk or Deputy Clerk	Moderator
RFO or senior administrator/s	Posting financial information as required
Other administration staff	Posting events online/design. Posting online agendas/mins/council business