



Town Hall

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## **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 Town Council and between the Town Council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

The Town Council has a website, Facebook and Twitter page and uses email to communicate. The Town Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time the Town 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 Town Council Facebook and Twitter pages provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our Town and promotes our community positively.

**Communications from the 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;
- Not contain any personal information.
- If it is official Town Council business it will be moderated by the Town Clerk to the Council;
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

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

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

The site is not monitored 24/7 and we will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, we 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 Town Council for official purposes and we will not respond to requests for information through this channel. Instead, please make direct contact with the Town Clerk/Deputy Town Clerk and/or members of the council by emailing.

We retain 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
- Alleges a breach of a Town Council's policy or the law

The Town Council's response to any communication received not meeting the above criteria will be to either ignore, inform the sender of our policy or send a brief response as appropriate. This will be at the Town 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 Town Council may post a statement that *'A post breaching the Town Council's Social Media Policy has been removed'*.

### **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 one of our Councillors for consideration and response. We may not respond to every comment we receive particularly if we are experiencing a heavy workload.

### **Town Council email**

The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk have their own council email addresses. The email accounts are monitored during office hours only, Monday to Friday, and we aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as we can.

The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk 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 Town Council will usually come from the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk. All new emails requiring data to be passed on to anyone (other than those listed in our General Privacy Notice), 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, copy to the Town Clerk. NB any emails copied to the Town Clerk become official and 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 Town Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

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