



Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy.

Adopted by Whittingham Parish Council on

11th November 2021

The use of social media and electronic communication enables the Parish Council to interact in a way that improves communications between the Council, residents, businesses and other agencies the Council works with.

The Council has a website and a 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's Facebook page intends to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities **relevant to the Parish Council**. Residents will be able to respond to posts but they will not be able to add new posts / themes to the timeline. Community functions, social events and businesses will not be promoted by the Parish Council, although a link to a Facebook page or website may be used to signpost residents to further information.

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.
- The site will be moderated by the Clerk to the Council with all Parish Councillors having administration access to post new material.
- The Parish Council is non-political and social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

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 abuse of 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 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.

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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 the Council's Clerk or Members of the council by using the contact details on our website <https://www.whittinghamparishcouncil.org.uk/index.php>

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 Council's policy or the law

The 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 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 Council's 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.

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 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.**

Parish/Town Council email.

The Clerk to the Council has their own council email address clerk@whittinghamparishcouncil.org.uk

The Clerk works for **12hrs a week** and whilst the email account is checked on a daily basis, detailed queries may take longer to reply to. In these instances, an acknowledgment will be sent along with an estimated response time. An 'out of office' message with alternative contact details will be used when appropriate.

The Clerk is 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 Clerk. Where information received needs to be forwarded externally, to comply with Data Protection regulations, the Clerk will ensure the sender is happy for their message / contact details to be passed on.

Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners but must not express an opinion on behalf of the Council unless the matter has been referred to in the Council's Minutes. Members are advised to copy the Clerk in to all Council related correspondence as these procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept. **NB** any emails copied to the Clerk become official and will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act.

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