

# ALDBROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

## Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

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

The Parish Council has a website and uses email to communicate. The Parish Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time the Parish 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 provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our Parish 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 Parish Council business it will be moderated by the Parish Clerk to the Council;

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Parish Council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Parish 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 Parish Council members or staff, will not be permitted.
- Share freely and be generous with official Parish Council posts, but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.
- Stay on topic.

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 Parish Clerk 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 Parish 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 Parish Council may post a statement that '*A post breaching the Parish Council's Social Media Policy has been removed*'.

#### **Parish 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 Council email**

The Parish Clerk email addresses. The email account are monitored during office hours only, Monday to Friday, and we aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as we can.

The Parish 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 Parish Council will usually come from the Parish 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 Parish Clerk. NB any emails copied to the Parish 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 Parish 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.

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