

Chesterton Parish Council

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables Chesterton 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 Council has a website, a Facebook profile and uses email to communicate.

The Council will always try to use the most effective channel of communication. 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.

Social Media posts from the Council will meet the following criteria, and will:

- 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.
- be moderated by either the Clerk to the Council or nominated Parish Councillor(s).
- not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.
- Comply with all equalities legislation

Parish Council social media posts will be published by the Clerk. Where individual Councillors post on social media regarding Parish Council business or actions it is crucial that this is done transparently, including a statement of whether the post is personal or an approved Parish Council communication.

Sending a message or posting via Facebook will not be considered as contacting the Parish Council for official purposes and we will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through these channels. Please make direct contact with the Clerk by sending an email.

Parish Council email

The Clerk to the Parish Council has a specific council email address, which is 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 is 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, and/or otherwise will always be copied to the Clerk.

Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views and, if appropriate, copy to the Clerk. Any emails sent to the Clerk or Councillors in their official capacity will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act 2018.

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

Date agreed at Council Meeting: 04/2025 – 9th September 2025

The Parish Council will not forward personal information on to other people or groups outside of the Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

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.

Internal communication and access to information within the Council.

The Council is continually looking at ways to improve its working and the use of social media and electronic communication 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 become 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 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 possible, but of course copying in all who need to know and ensuring that email trails have been removed.

Website – www.chestertonparishcouncil.org.uk

Clerk email – clerk@chestertonparishcouncil.org.uk

Date of Review – October 2028

Reviewed Date: October 2028