

## **Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy for Billingborough Parish Council**

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

The Council will maintain a website and 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 from time to time to reflect the new arrangements.

The Council Facebook page intends to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our Parish and promote 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.
- Official council business and the account will be administered by the Clerk to the Parish Council;
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

The site is not monitored 24/7 and will be used for the Council to post information only. Should you wish to contact the Council, normal channels of communication should be used, i.e. by emailing: [clerk@billingborough-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@billingborough-pc.gov.uk) by telephoning the Clerk: 07415 842591, or by contacting any of the Councillors whose contact details can be found on the Parish website: <https://billingborough.parish.lincolnshire.gov.uk/contact>.

### 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 do not respond to every comment received and there is no obligation to do so. The Parish Council will maintain the website to provide transparency regarding its decisions and will comply with its Publications Scheme.

The Council may, at its discretion, allow approved local groups to have a link to their own website or source of information on the Parish Council's website. The Council reserves the right to remove any

or all of a local group's information from the website if it feels that the content does not meet the Council's standards to be on its website.

#### Parish Council email

The Clerk to the Parish Council has their official council work email address for most official communication with the Parish Council. The email account is monitored and the aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as we can. The Council does not have formal office working hours. It is expected that a response to an email will occur at some point during the week that it is received. 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. All new emails requiring data to be passed on, will be followed up with seeking a data subject's consent if the information is to be shared before action is taken with that correspondence.

Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners about parish council business in relation to their own personal views, if appropriate, copy to the Clerk. Please note that any emails copied to the Clerk become official and will be subject to the Data Protection Act and 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 Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

#### SMS (texting) and messaging apps

Members and the Clerk may use SMS and messaging apps as a convenient way to communicate at times. All are reminded that this policy also applies to such messages.

#### Video Conferencing

This policy also applies to the use of video conferencing.

#### 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 communications is a major factor in delivering improvement. Councillors are expected to

abide by the Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and the Data Protection Act 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 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 at all possible, but of course copying in all who need to know and ensuring that email trails have been removed.

This Policy was adopted by Billingborough PC on 12th July 2022. Last Reviewed March 2026