Social Media, Electronic Communication and Press Policy[1].

Purpose and Scope

Digital, social media and electronic communications enable Wrose Parish Council to communicate effectively with councillors, residents, business organisations and public bodies it serves and works alongside.

The policy applies to the Clerk and all Parish Councillors when using any form of social media or electronic communication or when dealing with the press.

The Parish Council currently communicates through its website, email, Facebook and an internal What's App group. The Parish Council will always seek to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time the Parish Council may add to the channels of communication as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. If the Council adopts additional channels, this policy will be reviewed and updated accordingly

For the purpose of this policy, an official communication is one used on behalf of the Parish Council or through a Council-managed account. A personal communication is one made by an individual in their own capacity and must not imply authorisation by the Parish Council

Standards

In whatever format they are produced, communications from the Parish Council will meet the following criteria:

• Be civil, relevant and appropriate for their intended audience

• 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.

• If it is official parish Council business it will be moderated by either the Chair/Vice Chair of the Council or the Clerk to the Council.

• Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

[1] This policy is based on the modal template provided by SLCC, © Copyright 2019 SLCC

Use of the Parish Council Website.

The Parish Council's website provides information and updates regarding Wrose Parish Council activities. At present activities of other organisations are not published on the Parish Council's website. Members of the public can also raise queries to the Council via the website.

Where appropriate, the Parish Council may direct individuals to information on its website to answer an enquiry, or refer enquiries submitted via the website to one of the Parish Councillors for consideration and response. The Parish Council may not respond to every comment received particularly if staff are experiencing a heavy workload.

The Clerk to the Parish Council is responsible for maintaining and updating the website. The Clerk may draft and post factual articles about the work of the Council without needing approval from the full council, providing the content reflects agreed Council decisions, policy and work and this falls within the Clerk's delegated authority

Use of the Parish Council Facebook Page.

The Parish Council's Facebook page provides information and updates regarding Wrose Parish Council activities. At present activities of other organisations are not published on the Facebook page

The Clerk to the Parish Council is responsible for maintaining and updating the website.

The Clerk and Chair to the Parish Council may draft and post factual articles about the work of the Council without needing approval from the full council, providing the content reflects agreed Council decisions, policy and work. Posts, comments and private messages must be handled in accordance with the Council's data protection, confidentiality and information security requirements. Personal data, confidential Council business and information about individual cases must not be published unless there is a lawful and properly authorised basis for doing so.

The Clerk and Chair of the Parish Council will moderate comments posted on the Facebook page. Comments may be hidden or removed if they are unlawful, threatening, abusive, discriminatory, defamatory, obscene, contain personal or confidential information, infringe intellectual property rights, constitute spam or advertising, impersonate another person, or are unrelated to the post. Criticism of the Parish Council, its decisions or services will not be removed solely because it is critical, provided that it complies with these standards. A person who repeatedly breaches these standards may be blocked from the page where this is necessary and proportionate.

Use of Email

The Clerk to the Council has their own council email address (Cerk@wroseparishcouncil.gov.uk) and will use this email address for all Parish Council business. As the clerk works part time and there may be a delay in receiving

a reply to any enquiry. An ‘out of office’ message will be used when the Clerk is away for an extended period.

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and passing on any relevant mail to Parish Councillors 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 must use their Wrose Parish Council email accounts for all correspondence relating to their work as a Wrose Parish Councillor. Email responses should include the standard data protection explanations for recipients to understand how their data might be used

Personal information should not be shared with other people or groups outside of the Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers without consent or another lawful basis for doing so.

Councillors must address emails only to recipients who need the information Members should also be careful only to cc essential recipients on emails and avoid use of the ‘Reply to All’ option, unless every recipient needs the response. The use of blind copy should be used where appropriate to protect recipients’ addresses and unnecessary email histories should be removed.

Use of What’s App

The Parish Council has an internal What’s App group that Wrose Parish Councillors can join. It may be used only for routine logistical notifications such as meeting cancellations, to update councillors on arrival times at event meeting points or to notify councillors that agreed actions have been completed. It should not be used to discuss council business which requires a decision by the full council.

Other electronic means of communication

Councillors and the Clerk may use SMS or Video conferencing platforms from time to time as a convenient way to communicate. This policy also applies to such messages.

Dealing with the Press

Press enquires that require a response from the Parish Council should be passed to the Chair and Clerk in the first instance. The Chair is authorised to act as the “Voice” of the Parish Council but in doing so must, in that capacity, reflect the Council’s decisions and stated policies.

Where individual councillors speak to members of the press directly and have not been authorised to do so by the Parish Council, they must indicate that they are speaking from a personal view and not on behalf of the Parish Council. A request must be made to the press that the comment is clearly reported as such.

Links to other policies and procedures

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 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 Council's Code of Conduct and will be dealt with through its prescribed procedures (at the extreme it may also involve a criminal investigation).

Use of personal social media

Where councillors use personal social media accounts, they must ensure that any personal posts do not bring the Parish Council into disrepute, and they do not share any confidential information gained because of being a Parish Councillor.

Date adopted: 14 March 2024

Date of last review: 12 November 26