



## **Social Media, Electronic Communication and Press Policy<sup>1</sup>.**

The use of digital, social media and electronic communications enables the 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 Parish Council has a website and uses email and an internal What's App group 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.

In whatever format they are produced, communications from the Parish 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.
- 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.

### **Use of the Parish Council Website.**

The Parish Council's website provides information and updates regarding Wrose Parish Council activities. At the current time other organisations activities are not posted to the Parish Council's website.

Where necessary, the Parish Council may direct individuals to the website to see the required information, or forward questions 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.

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<sup>1</sup> This policy is based on the modal template provided by SLCC, © Copyright 2019 SLCC

The Clerk to the Parish Council is responsible for updating the website and may draft and post articles about the work of the Council without needing approval from the full council.

### **Use of Email**

The Clerk to the Council has their own council email address ([Cerk@wroseparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:Cerk@wroseparishcouncil.gov.uk)) and will use this email address for all Parish Council business. It should be noted that 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 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 should ensure they use their Wrose Parish Council email accounts for all correspondence relating to their work as a Wrose parish councillor. Personal information should not be forwarded on to other people or groups outside of the Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers without consent.

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.

### **Use of What's App**

The Parish Council has an internal What's App group which Wrose Parish Councillors can join. This channel of communication is for logistic notifications, for example, to inform councillors that a meeting has had to be cancelled or to update councillors on arrival times at event meeting points. 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. All are reminded that 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 mandated 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 mandated 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 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 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 as a result of being a Parish Councillor.

Date adopted: 14 March 2024

Date of next review: March 26