



BURTON & WINKTON PARISH COUNCIL

Communication and Social Media Policy

Aim

To establish clear easy to use channels of communication in order to provide information on matters affecting the community and encourage informed comment from interested individuals and groups.

Each parish councillor has a duty to represent without bias the interests of the whole community. They will always try to help with regard to matters relating to the Parish. However, individual councillors cannot make decisions outside of parish council meetings, neither can individual councillors respond on behalf of the parish council.

Means of Communication

Website

In the interest of transparency and to provide electors with a clear picture of activities the parish council will publish information on the parish council website, this will include Parish Council meeting agendas, minutes of parish council meetings and planning application. Hard copies are available from the Clerk on request.

Facebook

The Parish Council will publish information on our Facebook page on an ad hoc basis on matters of interest to our residents.

Noticeboards

The noticeboards at the community Centre, Salisbury Road and Fisherman's Haunt will display contact details of the Parish Clerk and councillors, statutory notices and items of interest. More comprehensive information is available on the Parish Council website and Facebook page.

Meetings

The parish council meets regularly at the Burton Community Centre. During every parish council meeting there is an opportunity for members of the public to raise matters of concern or to comment on an item on the agenda during the public participation section. After the conclusion of the public participation section members of the public are not permitted to contribute to the further agenda items unless permission is granted by the Chairman.

Further details can be found in the Standing Orders.

The Annual Parish Meeting is held in May, which is followed by Burton & Winkton Parish Council Annual Meeting which differs from regular meetings as the first Agenda item has to be the election of the Chairman.

Correspondence

All correspondence to the parish council should be addressed to the Clerk. This will ensure that the matter is recorded and passed to the parish council for their attention at the next meeting. If a resident wishes the subject to be raised and it is appropriate for discussion at a parish council meeting then the Clerk will have to be notified seven days before the publication of the agenda. All official correspondence from the parish council should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the parish council. Correspondence from individual parish councillors should be avoided but there



may be exceptional circumstances when this is appropriate for a parish councillor to issue correspondence in their own name. Such correspondence must be authorised by the parish council.

Communications with Press and public

The Clerk will clear all press reports or comments to the media in consultation with the Chairman and communications officer.

The Clerk will be the first point of contact for the media. Where it is appropriate for a councillor to represent the parish council, that person must be authorised as official spokesman for the council. Individual councillors are not permitted to issue media releases on behalf of the parish council.

Councillors will regularly be approached by members of the community as this is part of their role, however, enquiries from the public must be referred to the Clerk and dealt with as appropriate, this may be to add the matter to the relevant agenda item or to investigate the matter further.

Use of Social Media

The aim of this policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to parish councillors, council staff and others who engage with the council using online communications, collectively referred to as social media. DAPTC training is available.

Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet.

This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):

- Parish Council Website
- Facebook and other social networking sites
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites
- Youtube, TikTok and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- Blogs and discussion forums
- Email

The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication.

The principles of this policy apply to parish councillors and council staff and also applies to others communicating with the Parish Council.

Members are strongly advised to have a separate email address which is only used for Council business and correspondence. The nominated account will be subject to any request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The policy sits alongside relevant existing policies which need to be taken into consideration.



The current Code of Conduct applies to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication.

Individual parish councillors and council staff are responsible for what they post in a council and personal capacity.

In the main, councillors and council staff have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failure to comply with the law may have more serious consequences.

Social media may be used to

- Distribute agendas, post minutes and dates of meetings
- Advertise events and activities
- Good news stories linked to the website
- Vacancies
- Share information from partner agencies such as Principal Authorities, Police, Library, Health etc.
- Announce new information
- Post or Share information from other parish related community groups such as schools, sports clubs, community groups and charities
- Refer resident queries to the Clerk and all other councillors

Code of Practice

When using social media (including email) parish councillors and council staff must be mindful of the information they post in both a personal and council capacity and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative.

Online content should be accurate, objective, balanced and informative.

Parish councillors and council staff must not:

- hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms
- present personal opinions as that of the council
- present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to the council
- post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the council
- post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks
- engage in personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications
- use an individual's name unless given written permission to do so
- publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
- post any information that infringes copyright of others
- post any information that may be deemed libel
- post online activity that constitutes bullying or harassment
- bring the council into disrepute, including through content posted in a personal capacity
- post offensive language relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief
- conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence



Publishing untrue statements about a person which is damaging to their reputation is libel and can result in a court action and fine for damages.

This also applies if someone else publishes something libellous on your social media site. A successful libel claim will result in an award of damages against you.

Posting copyright images or text on social media sites is an offence. Breach of copyright will result in an award of damages against you.

Publishing personal data of individuals without permission is a breach of Data Protection legislation is an offence.

Publication of obscene material is a criminal offence and is subject to a custodial sentence.

Councillors views posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the council at a council or committee meeting may constitute pre-disposition, pre-determination or bias and may require the individual to declare an interest at council meetings.

Anyone with concerns regarding content placed on social media sites that denigrate parish councillors, council staff or residents should report them to the Clerk.

Misuse of social media content that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.

The Council will appoint a nominated person as communication officer and moderator of parish council social media output and be responsible for posting and monitoring content to ensure it complies with the Social Media Policy.

The moderator will have authority to remove any posts made by third parties from council social media pages which are deemed to be of a defamatory or libellous nature. Where appropriate the moderator will have the authority to report any such posting to any other appropriate agency including the Police and BCP Council's Safeguarding Unit.

This policy will be reviewed annually

*Reviewed and adopted by Burton & Winkton Parish Council: 18 July 2022
Reviewed July 2025*