

# **Drayton Parish Council**

## **Media Policy**

### **Purpose**

The aim of this Policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to the Clerk and Councillors of the Council regarding procedures and protocol to follow when using email and dealing with the press and public. This includes use of online communications, collectively referred to as social media and the management of the Council's website, as well as the more traditional ways of communicating.

### **Policy Statement**

Drayton Parish Council encourages the effective use of email. Such use must always be lawful and must not compromise the Council's information and the Clerk's computer system.

All users must ensure that their use of email will not adversely affect the Council or its business and not damage the Council's or its employees' reputations or otherwise violate any of the Council's policies.

### **Benefits of a multimedia policy**

There are many benefits to using a variety of ways to communicate with our public. We are committed to traditional ways of communication with newsletters, questionnaires and through our website. Our Social Media platform provides additional channels for audiences to interact with the Parish Council, provide feedback, seek help and suggest ways we can improve our services. The Council uses Facebook as its Social Media site.

### **Press and Public**

In the interests of openness and transparency, members of the public and press may film, record, photograph or use social media in order to report on the proceedings of a meeting of the Council or its committees when they are open to the public. This does not extend to live verbal commentary. It will be encouraged that all filming and photography is conducted from the area designated in the meeting room. No flash photography or additional lighting should be used without prior consent. People under the age of 18 or other members of the public not wishing to be filmed or photographed should notify the Clerk or Chairman and should sit in the area designated for this purpose. The council will do all it can to respect their wishes but it should be noted that there is not a requirement for anyone to notify the council that they are filming. Improper conduct or any disruptive behaviour could result in expulsion from the meeting.

### **Press Releases**

It is the Clerk's role to issue press releases as instructed by the Council. In all cases, where quotations are included from Councillors in the press release, the Clerk will

obtain approval from the Councillor. Press Releases will detail the name and contact details of the Clerk. No Press Release should be issued containing the Clerk's or Councillor's personal opinion.

### **The Parish Council's website**

This is managed by the Clerk. The Clerk will, in a timely way, upload the information as required by law such as minutes and agendas, financial and governance information. Additional information uploaded will include news items supported by photographs.

### **Facebook**

Social media posts will be clear and use language accessible and suitable for the platform on which they appear. Language will be informal in tone but reflect the Parish Council as a credible public body. Updates will be timely, addressing current topics of interest and contributing to the public discussion on activities and issues. Updates will be informative to members of the public and other statutory and non-statutory bodies with links to our website. Where possible and appropriate, the Parish Council will post media such as photos.

### **Operation of Facebook**

The Parish Council will not respond to all comments posted on Facebook, but will always aim to provide a response when maintaining or protecting its reputation. Facebook will be monitored during weekday office hours. The Parish Council cannot ensure comments will be viewed during evenings, weekends or during public holidays, or staff holiday times. The Clerk will manage the social media posts. The views expressed by the Clerk on the social media account will be interpreted as those of the Parish Council. The Clerk must be mindful when using social media, particularly when commenting on contentious issues, and must speak on behalf of the Parish Council, rather than personal opinion. No comments will be made to posts received. Posts which contain personal and inflammatory remarks will be removed.

Councillors are responsible for what they post in connection with the Council. Councillors are strongly advised to have separate council and personal email addresses and adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct and follow the principles of the Data Protection Act, as incorporated into the Council's Data protection Policy.

### **Use of Internet and Email Facilities**

All users must accept that communications via the Clerk's email system is not secure or encrypted and they should take particular care when sending potentially sensitive or confidential information.

All users must accept and agree that the communications both to and from the Council via email may be monitored for the purpose of ensuring appropriate use of this methodology. Users should also be aware that deleted emails may still be accessible from back-up procedures.

## **General Guidance**

Email users are advised to be aware of the following:

1. Messages sent to groups of people must be relevant to all concerned.
2. Messages sent by this method are not necessarily seen by the recipient within the current week. If the message is urgent, an alternative method of communication should be used.
3. Drayton Parish Council cannot be held responsible for damages, losses, expenses, demands and/or claims that may be suffered by a user of this facility.
4. The Clerk may, from time to time, choose to operate a filtering system in order to monitor offensive or clearly inappropriate material and may quarantine any messages in that category.
5. All users must comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 when placing personal data in messages or attachments.

## **Inappropriate Use**

The following is deemed unacceptable use or behaviour:

1. Visiting sites that contain obscene, hateful, pornographic or illegal material or distributing, disseminating or storing such material.
2. Perpetrating any form of fraud, or software, film or music piracy.
3. Using the internet to send offensive or harassing material to other users.
4. Downloading commercial software or any copyrighted materials belonging to third parties, unless the download is covered or permitted under a commercial agreement or other such licence.
5. Hacking into unauthorised systems, sites or files.
6. Publishing defamatory and/or knowingly false information about the council, colleagues, Members and/or customers on social networking sites, blogs, wikis or any other publishing format.
7. Revealing confidential information about the council in a personal online posting, upload or transmission; including financial information and information relating to employees, Members and/or internal discussions.
8. Introducing any form of malicious software into the council network.
9. Use of the council communications system to set up a personal business or send chain letters.
10. Broadcasting unsolicited personal views on social, political, religious or other non-council related matters or transmitting unsolicited commercial or advertising material.

## **Actions upon termination of contract of employment, or cessation of term of office of councillors**

All council equipment and data, for example laptops, paper copies and mobile devices, must be returned to the council when the employees/councillors leave the council.

**Monitoring**

All users must use email responsibly. Serious breaches of this policy by a Council employee will amount to gross misconduct and Drayton Parish Council reserves the right to take disciplinary or legal action against any person who fails to comply with this policy which may result in dismissal.

Date policy adopted            16<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Date to be reviewed            December 2023