



Langton Matravers Parish Council

Communication and Social Media Policy.

(this policy supersedes the previous Communications policy)

Introduction

The purpose of the policy is to provide guidelines for Clerk and Councillors relating to communication and the use social media. It aims to clarify how such communications will be handled as well as the right of access by third parties to information and correspondence received and outgoing, in line with the Council's Publications Scheme and commitment to Transparency in all dealings with the public. The Council has a website, but uses email and post for two way communications. At this point in time the Council has no plans to use other forms of media. The Council's website is intended for the promulgation on information to keep parishioners informed. The site is not intended as a vehicle for the receipt of communications. Correspondence by any media other than post, email or phone will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes

Incoming Correspondence

All correspondence received at the Parish Office addressed to the Council or Clerk will be considered to be in the public domain, unless personally confidential or marked at the top as 'Private' and/or 'Confidential'. The Clerk will not accept or process any messages addressed to the Council sent to an e-mail address other than the Council's.

Outgoing correspondence

The Council's aim is to reply promptly to all correspondence. All communications on behalf of the Council will usually come from the Clerk, and/or otherwise will always be copied to the Clerk.

Circulation of Correspondence

The Clerk will normally circulate by email to the Council all correspondence addressed to the Council which may be of interest or relevance, or may require the Council's comment or decision and which appears on the monthly Clerk's Report. In the interests of saving Councillors' time, the Clerk will make a professional decision not to circulate some items of correspondence, for a variety of reasons, though these can be made available if requested.

When requested by members of the public, the Clerk will forward items of correspondence in the public domain, unless that correspondence is personally confidential or marked 'Private' or 'Confidential'. In the interests of Transparency, if it is an e-mail message, the Clerk will sometimes copy Councillors in to correspondence thus forwarded. Members of the public may also see copies of such correspondence on request at the Parish Office.

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Council Website.

The Council web site will be used for the promulgation of all documents referred to in the Council's Publication Scheme as well as other information which in the view of the Council will be of interest to the public. All such information will be compliant with the General Data Protection Requirement (GDPR).

The Council may, at its discretion, allow and enable approved local groups to have and maintain a presence on its website for the purpose of presenting information about the group's activities. The local group would be responsible for maintaining the content and ensuring that it meets the Council's 'rules and expectation' for the web site. The Council reserves the right to remove any or all of a local group's information from the web site if it feels that the content does not meet the Council's 'rules and expectation' for its website. Where content on the website is maintained by a local group it should be clearly marked that such content is not the direct responsibility of the Council.

Councillors' correspondence and use of social media

Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views, if appropriate, copy to the Clerk. (NB any emails copied to the Clerk become official and will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act.). Councillors should ensure that such communications are respectful, truthful and lawful.

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.

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.

Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act in all their work on behalf of the Council including the use of social media.

Adopted by the council by resolution 9th January 2020.