

Mundford Parish Council

Electronic Communications Policy

Introduction

This policy is introduced to provide guidelines as to the use of electronic communications within Mundford Parish Council, between Councillors and employees, and between the parish Council and the public. Electronic communications may include emails, text messaging on any platform, and social media.

The policy complies with all relevant legislation including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislation 25 May 2018.

Responsibilities

All Councillors and employees should be aware that social media is a constantly changing area and this policy should be followed in relation to any forms of communication used. Any information posted or published may be public information for a long time and individual Councillors are responsible for what they post.

Code of Conduct for use of electronic communications

When participating in any online communication on a council matter, Councillors and employees should:

- Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent.
 - Always disclose your identity and affiliation to the Parish Council.
 - Never make false or misleading statements.
 - Not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment.
 - Be mindful of the information they post on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council or bring the Council into disrepute or is contrary to the Council's Code of Conduct or any other Policies.
 - Keep the tone of your comments respectful and informative. Councillors should refrain from personal criticism in social media of other Councillors and individuals or organisations with whom the Parish Council has dealings, in accordance with the Nolan principles of public life. [The Seven Principles of Public Life - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-seven-principles-of-public-life).
1. Selflessness-Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
 2. Integrity-Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
 3. Objectivity-Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
 4. Accountability-Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure

Adopted on: 5th October 2023

To be reviewed: October 2025

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this.

5. Openness-Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty-Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership-Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

- Language that may be deemed as offensive relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion, or belief should not be published on any social media site.
- Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications.
- Permission to publish photographs or videos on social media sites should be sought from the persons or organisations in the video or photograph before being uploaded.
- Respect the privacy of other Councillors, employees and residents.
- Do not post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations (for example, copyright laws see below).

Councillors and employees should be aware that:

- Posting copyright images or text on social media sites is an offence. Breach of copyright may result in an award of damages against you.
- Publishing personal data of individuals without permission is a breach of Data Protection legislation and 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 meeting may constitute Pre-disposition, Predetermination or Bias and will require the individual to declare an interest at council meetings.
- All Councillors and employees are required to adhere to this policy.

Mundford Parish Council will use all reasonable efforts to ensure that use of social media in connection with its business by Councillors, employees and members of the public are within the law. It cannot be held responsible for damages resulting from the misuse of social media in a way contrary to this policy.

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