



HOVETON PARISH COUNCIL

Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy

INTRODUCTION

The use of digital and social media and electronic communications enables Hoveton Parish Council to interact in a way that improves communications both within the Council itself and between the Council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

Hoveton Parish Council has a website, a Facebook page, and uses email to communicate. The Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time, the Council may add to the channels of communication 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.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL

The Council's website and Facebook page provide information and updates regarding the work of the Council and activities and opportunities within our parish. They aim to promote our community positively.

Communications from Hoveton Parish Council will meet the following criteria:

- they will be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- they will not contain any content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, defamatory, obscene, vulgar, abusive, hateful or threatening;
- they will not harass or discriminate on the basis of race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference or other factors;
- they will not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which the Council does not own the copyright;
- they will not contain any personal information about third parties unless consent has been given by the third parties concerned;
- they will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

All official communications from the Council will be moderated and published by either the Parish Clerk, the Chairman of the Council, or a duly appointed member of the Council.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE COUNCIL

In order to ensure that all discussions on Hoveton Parish Council's website and Facebook page are productive, respectful, and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives, the Council expects users of these sites to comply with the following guidelines:

- be considerate and respectful of others; vulgarity, threats and abusive language will not be tolerated;
- differing opinions and the discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on individuals will not be permitted;
- share freely any official Council posts, but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due;
- stay on topic;
- refrain from using the Council's website or Facebook page for commercial purposes or to advertise, market or sell products.

Hoveton Parish Council's website and Facebook page are not monitored 24/7, and so the Council will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. Although the Council will endeavour to respond to messages and comments received, and to follow up on any comments, suggestions or concerns raised where appropriate, sending a message or posting a comment through the Council's website or Facebook page will not be considered as 'contacting the Council' for official purposes, and the Council will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information or action through these channels. Any such requests that require a response from the Council should therefore be emailed to the Council.

EMAILING THE COUNCIL

The Parish Clerk has a dedicated email address (clerk@hoveton-pc.org.uk) which members of the public may use for contacting the Council. The Clerk is responsible for responding to emails received by the Council and for passing on any relevant emails to members of the Council for information and/or action. The Clerk's email account is monitored mainly during office hours, Monday to Friday, on a part-time basis, though the Clerk aims to respond to all emails received as soon as possible.

Members of the public may also contact members of the Council directly, using the councillor email addresses provided on the Council's website. Individual councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views. If appropriate, these messages may be copied to the Clerk to ensure that a complete and proper record of correspondence is kept (any emails copied to the Clerk become official and will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act). All emails sent on behalf of the Council will usually come from the Clerk or will be copied to the Clerk.

DATA PROTECTION

In accordance with the terms of its *Information and Data Protection Policy*, the Council will not share emails containing personal data with any other third party without the permission of the data subject (in this instance, personal data includes names, addresses, email or IP addresses, and cookie identifiers). All emails requiring personal data to be shared with a third party in order for action to be taken will require the completion of a data consent form before further action may be taken with that correspondence.

All personal information provided to Hoveton Parish Council through the Council's website or Facebook page will be processed and stored according to the terms of the Council's *Information and Data Protection Policy*. By transacting with Hoveton Parish Council through its website or Facebook page, individuals are deemed to be giving consent for their personal

data as provided to be processed and stored in accordance with the *Information and Data Protection Policy*. Such transactions may include, but are not limited to, commenting on the Council's website or Facebook page, sending a direct message to the Council via its online services, or subscribing to or following the Council's website or blog.

TERMS OF USE

By accessing, using or commenting on Hoveton Parish Council's website or Facebook page, members of the public agree to be bound by the terms of use set out in this policy and by any individual terms of use displayed on the Council's website or Facebook page.

The Council reserves the right to monitor and administer its website and Facebook Page as it sees fit. Any communications received which are not in line with this policy or the stated terms of use will be removed as quickly as is practicably possible. Comments submitted to the Council's website or blog may be moderated prior to publication to ensure their suitability and compliance with this policy. Any comments received which are not in line with this policy will not be published.

Hoveton Parish Council reserves the right to monitor and administer content or comments posted on the Council's website or Facebook page by third parties and, at its sole discretion, to remove any content posted thereon. This right is unqualified and will not be subject to explanation on a case-by-case basis. As a guide, comments or content that include any of the following are likely to be removed:

- any instances of obscenity, vulgarity, or abusive language;
- personal attacks, insults, bullying, or threatening language;
- harassment, discrimination or 'hate speech' on the basis of race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, or any other factor;
- potentially false, libellous or defamatory statements;
- plagiarised material or any material that violates copyrights, trademark rights, or other intellectual property rights of third parties;
- private, personal information published without consent;
- unauthorised disclosure of proprietary or confidential information;
- information or links unrelated to the content of the discussion;
- deliberate attempts to create upset, arguments, discord or conflict (trolling);
- commercial promotions, advertisements or spam;
- information which is false or is likely to mislead readers;
- any material in violation of any laws or which alleges a breach of policy or laws.

Users of the Council's online services must not employ false identifiers to impersonate any person or entity or to misrepresent or disguise the true origin or intention of any content or comment. False or anonymous postings are neither necessary nor consistent with the open and honest level of dialogue expected by the Council. Therefore, contributors are expected to use their real names when submitting content or comments. The Council reserves the right to block any third party from commenting on its website or Facebook page, to disallow the use of any screen name or email address, and to terminate any user's posting privileges at any time, including individual and group postings.

Such actions as those outlined above may be taken on behalf of Hoveton Parish Council by the Parish Clerk, the Chairman of the Council, or a duly appointed member of the Council, at the sole discretion of the individual concerned.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

'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 which include, but are not limited to:

- the Parish Council's website;
- Facebook, Twitter and other microblogging or social networking sites;
- YouTube and other video clips and podcast sites;
- LinkedIn;
- blogs and discussion forums;
- Parish Council emails.

Members of the Council and the Parish Clerk may use SMS (texting) from time to time as a convenient way to communicate. This policy also applies to SMS messages and to the use of video conferencing (e.g. Skype) should this medium be used to communicate.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Councillors are expected to abide by the Council's Code of Conduct in all of their work on behalf of the Parish Council. When participating in any online communications, councillors should ensure it is clear whether they are posting as a councillor or in a private capacity as an individual.

Councillors should be mindful of the information they post online and should ensure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Parish Council. Comments made online by councillors should not bring the Council into disrepute or be contrary to the Council's Code of Conduct or any other Council policy. Councillors should not present themselves online in a way that may cause reputational issues, and they should never make false or misleading statements.

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 should maintain an awareness of the confidentiality of information they have access to and should not share personal data or confidential information online. Members should be careful only to cc essential recipients into emails (i.e. to avoid use of the 'Reply To All' option where possible) and to remove email trails where necessary to prevent the sharing of personal data. Failure to properly observe confidentiality may be seen as a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct and will be dealt with through the Council's prescribed procedures.

Adopted by Hoveton Parish Council on 5th September 2018