

DUNCHIDEOCK PARISH COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

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

The Council uses email as the official method of communication and has a website.

Parish Council Emails

The email address to contact the Council is parishclerk@dunchideock.org.uk. This is the official address to use to contact the Council, the Councillors and the Clerk. Requests for information should also be sent to this address. Some contact may be by letter at the discretion of the Clerk.

The emails are not monitored continually and only during the working hours of the Clerk on Monday to Friday. An auto-response message will be sent to confirm receipt. A reply to a message will be sent within a reasonable time and to ensure that any comments are passed to the relevant people or authorities. Please do not include personal or private information in your communications to the Council.

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with emails received and for passing on any relevant mail to members or external agencies for information and or action. All communications on behalf of the Council will usually come from the Clerk and or otherwise will always be copied to the Clerk.

Councillors may be contacted by residents. Matters raised should be acknowledged by the Councillor and forwarded to the Clerk for any necessary action. Depending on the nature of the matter the Clerk will reply to the Councillor to forward the response to the resident, or reply direct to the resident with a copy to the Councillor. A Councillor must not originate an email that gives the impression they have delegated authority to act or give a decision or authorise any action on behalf of the Council, except when obtaining information in order to report to the Council.

Criteria for Communications from the Council

Communications from the Council will meet the following criteria: -

- Be considerate, polite, courteous and respectful of other people and relevant
- Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented, or racially offensive
- Not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere
- Not contain any personal information
- Will be moderated by either the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Council
- Will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising

Criteria for Communications to the Council

Communications to the Council are expected to be: -

- Polite and courteous
- In respect of matters dealt with by the Council
- In respect of a matter to be considered by the Council or to be referred to another authority

To ensure that contact with the Council is productive, respectful and consistent it is requested that emails do not contain content that is: -

- Obscene or racist content
- Personal attacks including comments, insults, harassing, defamatory, abusive or threatening language on anyone, including the Council members or the Clerk
- Potentially libellous or unlawful statements
- Private and personal information
- Not accurate in any comments
- Unreasonable, unreasonably persistent, or vexatious communications

The response of the Council to any communications received that do not meet the above criteria will be to either ignore them or inform the sender of the policy of the Council or send a brief response as appropriate. This will be at the Council's discretion based on the message received. If the email alleges a breach of a Council policy or the law the person who sent it will be asked to submit a formal complaint to the Council as soon as possible.

Parish Council Website

The content of the website is controlled by the Parish Council. The website contains a considerable amount of information regarding the work, policies and reference documents for the Council. Where necessary, the person contacting the Council may be directed to the website to see the required information.

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 requirements for the 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.

Video Conferencing

If this facility is used to communicate, this policy also applies to the use of video conferencing.

Councillors Emails and Websites

Councillors are responsible for the content of their emails and comments on their websites if they are used as a method of communicating comments about the Council. Councillors are expected to be aware of the confidentiality of the information to which they have access and are not to share the information with anyone. Councillors should also be careful to only copy essential recipients on emails and avoid use of the "Reply to All" option if at all possible.

The making of critical comments on a website and failure to properly observe confidentiality will be a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct.