

FALDINGWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Communication Policy 2022

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

The Council has a website, access to community Facebook pages, 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 that 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.

Facebook posts can be used to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within the Parish and promote our community positively.

Communications from the Council will meet the following criteria:

- Be civil, tasteful 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, for which we do not own the copyright
- Not contain any personal information
- Social media posts will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising

To ensure that all discussions on Facebook pages are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives, we ask you to follow these guidelines:

- Be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarity, threats, or abuse of language will not be tolerated
- Differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including the Council members or staff, will not be permitted

- Share freely and be generous with official Council posts, but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due
- Stay on topic

Sending a message/post via Facebook will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and we will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through these channels. Instead, please make direct contact with the council's Clerk and/or members of the Council by emailing.

The Council's response to any communication received not meeting the above criteria will be to either ignore, inform the sender of our policy or send a brief response as appropriate. This will be at the Council's discretion based on the message received, given our limited resources available. Any information posted on Facebook pages not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. Repeat offenders will be blocked from the Facebook page.

Parish Council Website

Where necessary, we may direct those contacting us to our website to see the required information, or we may forward their question to one of our Councillors for consideration and response. We may not respond to every comment we receive particularly if we are experiencing a heavy workload.

Parish/Town Council email

The Clerk to the Council has their own council email address:

faldingworthpc@hotmail.com

The email account is monitored mainly during office hours, Monday to Friday, and we aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as we can. An 'out of office' message should be used when appropriate.

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and 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.

Press

Enquiries from the press must be answered by the Chairman or Clerk, unless otherwise instructed.

If the Council wishes to send a message to the local press this should be directed through the Clerk.

Councillors

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.

These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

Do not forward personal information on to other people or groups outside of the Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

Internal communication and access to information within the Council.

The Council is continually looking at ways to improve its working and the use of social media and electronic communications is a major factor in delivering improvement.

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

Councillors are encouraged to post messages on social media, especially established Facebook pages, to promote and raise awareness of Council activities. Posts made by Councillors that are anti-Council, will be considered a breach of the Code of Conduct.

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 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 (at the extreme it may also involve a criminal investigation).

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.