

Audley Rural Parish Council

Social Media Policy – adopted November 2019

Introduction

The use of digital and social media now has a clear and compelling impact on all areas of local government enabling better and more direct contact between the Parish Council, the people and businesses it serves and the agencies that it works with.

This Social Media Policy aims to describe how the Parish Council will use social media to improve and expand the ways in which it communicates internally, with its local residents, local businesses and the various government (local and central) agencies that it deals with.

Social media provide alternative channels (to written correspondence, telephone and face to face conversation) for the Parish Council to inform and respond to questions and queries raised by people who live in, work in and visit the parish. It also enables the Parish Council to deal more efficiently with the various agencies (e.g. the surrounding parishes, district council and the county council) that deliver services to local people.

The Social Media Policy

Use of digital and social media will form an integral part of how the Parish Council delivers its services in a way that improves the communications both within the Parish Council and between the Parish Council and the people businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

The Parish Council has a corporate presence on the web and an e-Mail channel which it uses to communicate with people who live in, work in and visit the parish.

The Parish Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. We may ask those who contact us for their preferred channel of communication when we deal with them.

The Council issues information to local Facebook pages to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our Parish and promote our community positively.

Over time the Parish 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 Social Media Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

Our rules and expectation

Most online communities have their own rules and guidelines, which we will always abide by.

We promise that any communications (this includes all content on the Parish Council's web site) from the Parish Council will meet the following criteria:

- be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- not contain content copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright;
- not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;
- will be moderated by either the Chair of the Parish Council or the Clerk to the Parish Council.
- social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising

Equally, we expect any communications to the Parish Council to meet the following criteria:

- be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- not contain content copied from elsewhere, for which the enquirer does not own the copyright;
- not sending large volumes of the same message (also called "spamming");
- not to contain anyone's personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;

Channels and responsibilities

Parish Council Twitter channel

Currently the Parish Council does not operate a Twitter channel.

Parish Council Facebook channel

Currently the Parish Council does not operate a Facebook channel.

Parish Council YouTube channel

Currently the Parish Council does not operate a YouTube channel.

Parish Council website

Our web site is hosted by wordpress.com and is normally continuously available.

The Parish Council will maintain one web site

<http://audleyparishcouncil.org>

The Clerk to the Parish Council is responsible for publishing content to the web site.

For non-standard publications, the Chair/Vice Chair of the Parish Council is responsible for approving content on the web site prior to its publication.

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 Parish Councillors for consideration and response.

We may not respond to every comment we receive particularly if we are experiencing a heavy workload.

The Parish 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 Parish Council's "rules and expectation" (see previous page) for the web site. The Parish Council reserves the right to remove any or all of a local group's information from the web site if it feels that content does not meet the Parish Council's "rules and expectation" for its web site.

Where content on the web site is maintained by a local group it should be clearly marked that such content is not the direct responsibility of the Parish Council.

Parish Council e-Mail channel

The Clerk to the council has their own council email address (clerks email address)

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. Please note however that the Clerk works part-time and is the sole employee, so there may be occasions when we do not meet these timescales.

The Parish Council will maintain one e-Mail address, currently it is:

audleyparishcouncil@hotmail.co.uk

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. All new Emails requiring data to be passed on, will be followed to seek consent before action is taken with that correspondence.

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.

SMS (texting)

Members and the Clerk may use SMS as a convenient way to communicate at times. All are reminded that this policy also applies to such messages.

Video Conferencing e.g. Skype

If this medium is used to communicate please note that this policy also applies to the use of video conferencing.

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 and “our rules and expectation” (shown earlier in this document) in all their work on behalf of the Parish Council.

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.

Date Adopted:

Date for Review – Next available Statutory Annual meeting of the Parish Council