

# Social Media Policy and Electronic Communication Policy

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## Introduction

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

The Council has an information page on the village website [www.bourtondorset.org](http://www.bourtondorset.org), and can request posts to be placed on the privately moderated Bourton Village Facebook group. The Council also uses email and the village noticeboards to communicate, as appropriate. During 2022, the Council will introduce a Council-administered Facebook Page. This will set out to provide an attractive promotion of the village for all to see including information on local events and services as well as necessary notices. Facebook subscribers may request the placement of posts and may comment on some posts that have been placed on the page. This service will be administered by the Parish Clerk and such other individuals with the necessary knowledge, availability and standing as may be decided from time to time.

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 pages of the type described are available to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within the Parish and to 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 the Parish does not own the copyright.
- not contain any personal information.
- will be moderated by the Clerk to the Council or other duly appointed individual(s)
- not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

To ensure that all discussions on the Council page are productive, respectful, and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives, public inputs shall 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.
- refrain from using the Council's Facebook page for commercial purposes or to advertise market or sell products.

The Facebook site will not be monitored 24 hours a day and the administrator (the Clerk) will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, they will endeavour to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people or authorities. Please do not include personal/private information in your social media posts.

Sending a message or posting via Facebook will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through these channels. Direct contact should be made with the Parish Clerk ([clerk@bourton-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@bourton-pc.gov.uk)) and/or members of the council by sending an email or letter. Their names and email addresses are provided on the website.

The Council retains the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- obscene or racist content.
- personal attacks, insults, or threatening language.
- potentially libellous or defamatory statements.
- plagiarised material; any material in violation of any laws, including copyright.
- private, personal information published without consent.
- information or links unrelated to the content of the forum.
- commercial promotions or spam.
- allegations of a breach of a Council's policy or the law.

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 social media not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. Repeat offenders will be blocked. The Council may post a statement that 'A post breaching the Council's Social Media Policy has been removed'. If the post alleges a breach of a Council's policy or the law, the person who posted it will be asked to submit a formal complaint to the Council or report the matter to the Police as soon as possible to allow due process.

#### Village Website

Where necessary, the Council may direct respondents to the village website to see the required information or may forward their question to Councillors for consideration and response. Not every comment will receive comment. Note: the current website is not owned or maintained by the Council.

## Parish Council Email

The Clerk to the Parish Council has a specific council email address [clerk@bourton-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@bourton-pc.gov.uk). The email account is monitored mainly during the office hours of 4pm to 6pm Monday to Friday, and the aim is to reply to all questions sent as soon as possible. An 'out of office' message is 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.

Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views, if appropriate, copy to the Clerk. Any emails sent to the Clerk or Councillors in their official capacity will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act 2018. 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 communication 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. As more and more information become 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.

Councillors should also be careful only to copy essential recipients on emails. They should avoid use of the 'Reply to All' option, deliberately select those who need to know and ensure that email trails have been removed.

Agreed by Bourton Parish Council

Lead Councillor/Officer:	Eve Wynn, Clerk.
Adopted:	November 2021
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