

Whimble Parish Council

Social Media Policy

(Approved by the Council on 17 March 2025)

1.0 Overview

- 1.1 The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables Whimble Parish Council ('the Council') to interact in a way that improves communications, both within the Council and between the Council, residents and other stakeholders.
- 1.2 However, the Council is mindful of the fact that, due to the demographic of Whimble, not all residents have access to electronic communication channels, so endeavours to communicate in other ways as well (such as through Whimble News and via the Council noticeboard).
- 1.3 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.

2.0 Social Media and Website

- 2.1 The Council has a website (www.whimbleparishcouncil.gov.uk), social media platform (Facebook) and uses email and face to face communication.
- 2.2 The Council uses Facebook and the website to provide information and updates, and to highlight the work being done by the Council. Information on Facebook is shared on the Whimble Parish Council page and also the Whimble What's On page.
- 2.3 Communications from the Council will meet the following criteria:
 - be civil, factual 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 Council does not own the copyright
 - not contain any personal information
 - if it is official Council business, it will be moderated by the Parish Clerk
 - not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising
- 2.4 In order to ensure that all discussions on the Council's social media platforms are respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives, contributors are asked to adhere to the following guidelines:
 - be considerate and respectful of others - vulgarity, threats or abuse of language will not be tolerated and will be removed
 - differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including councillors or staff, will not be permitted

- share freely official Council posts, but be aware of copyright laws and be accurate, giving credit where credit is due
 - Stay on topic
 - Keep the content factual and to the point
 - Positively promote the work and decisions of the Council – even if you don't agree with the decision that has been made
 - The Council's website and social media platforms cannot be used for commercial purposes or to advertise, market or sell products or services.
- 2.5 The social media platforms are not monitored 24 hours a day and the Council will not reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, it will endeavour to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people or authorities. Personal or private information in should not be included in social media posts.
- 2.6 Sending a message or posting via social media will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and the Council will not monitor or respond to requests for information through this medium. Instead, please make direct contact with the Parish Clerk (clerk@whimpleparishcouncil.gov.uk) and/or councillors by email, telephone or letter.
- 2.7 The Council reserves the right to remove comments or content that includes:
- obscene or racist comment
 - 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
- 2.8 If a communication is received that does not adhere to the above criteria, then the Council's response will be to either ignore it, inform the sender of the Council's policy or send a brief response as appropriate.
- 2.9 This will be at the Council's discretion based on the message received, given the limited resources available.
- 2.10 Any information posted on social media - not in line with the above criteria - will be removed as quickly as practically possible.
- 2.11 Those who repeatedly breach this policy will be blocked.
- 2.12 The Council may post a statement that 'A post breaching the Council's Social Media Policy has been removed'. If the post alleges breach of a Council 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. Where necessary, the Council may direct those contacting it to the Council's website to see the required information or may forward the question to a councillor for consideration and response.

- 2.13 The Council takes seriously personal attacks, insults, threatening language against officers and Councillors in any form (e.g. verbal or written) and any incidents of this nature will be reported to the Police.