# NORTH NIBLEY 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, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

The Council has a website, Facebook page 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.

# Communications from the Council will meet the following criteria:

* Be civil 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 or have authority/permission to share;
* Not contain any personal information (unless with explicit consent).
* If it is official Council business it will be moderated by either the Chair/Vice Chair of the Council or the Clerk to the Council;
* Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

**Facebook.**

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

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council’s aims and objectives, you are required 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 tolerated.
* 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
* Social media must not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.
* Refrain from using the Council’s Facebook page for commercial purposes or to advertise market or sell products.

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 by emailing.**

We 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 to us.

We retain the right to remove comments or content that includes:

* Obscene or racist content
* Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language
* Potentially libellous 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 the Facebook page not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. Repeat offenders will be blocked from the Facebook page. 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.

# Parish Council email

The Clerk to the council is a part-time position. The Clerk has their own council email address (clerk@northnibleyparishcouncil.org.uk)

This 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 will 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. Where data is required to be passed on the clerk or council will obtain written confirmation (usually via email) 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 such emails may be copied to the Clerk.

Note. These emails may be subject to the “Freedom of Information Act”. Any email sent or copied to the Clerk becomes official correspondence and will be subject to “The Freedom of Information Act”.

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

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.

# 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.

Instant Messaging (SMS texting; Whats App etc)

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

# Video Conferencing (e.g. Zoom.)

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.

**Recording or broadcasting of Parish Council Meetings.**

The council may itself photograph, film, record or broadcast meetings and can retain, use or dispose of such material as appropriate to the council and in line with GDPR. Where a council proposes to record and/or broadcast all of its own meetings it will be bound by this policy and may edit shared publications to comply with this policy.

# 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 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 only to share confidential information with anyone when this is appropriate. 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).

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| Version | Version 1 |
| Change Log | * V1. New Policy |
| Approved and Adopted | March 2022 – Minute Ref: March 2022 Item 16 |
| Signed | Amanda Rossiter – Clerk  Rex Symons - Chair |

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. Where appropriate ensuring that email trails have been removed.