



Dickens Heath 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 Parish Council, and between the Parish Council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves. The Parish Council has a website, Facebook page and uses email to communicate. The Parish Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time the Parish Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve the services it delivers. When these changes occur this Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

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

Communications from the Council will meet the following criteria:

- Be civil, respectful and relevant;
- Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially sensitive or offensive;
- Not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright;
- Not contain any personal information without consent.
- If it is official Parish Council business it will be moderated by either the Chair of the Parish Council or the Clerk;
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Parish Council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Parish Council's aims and objectives, we ask you to follow these guidelines:

- Be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarity, threats or abusive language will not be tolerated.

- Differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including the Parish Council members or staff, will not be permitted.
- Share freely and be generous with official Parish Council posts, but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.
- Stay on topic.
- Refrain from using the Parish Council's Facebook page for commercial purposes or to advertise, market or sell products.

The website and Facebook page are not monitored 24/7 and we will not generally be able to reply individually to messages or comments received. However, 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. Sending a message/post via Facebook will not be considered as contacting the Parish 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 Parish Clerk and/or members of the Parish Council by emailing.

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

- Obscene or racist content
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening or racist 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

The Parish 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 Parish 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 Parish Council may post a statement that 'A post breaching the Parish Council's Social Media Policy has been removed'. If the post alleges a breach of a Parish Council's policy or the law, the person who posted it will be asked to submit a formal complaint to the Parish Council or report the matter to the Police as soon as possible to allow due process.

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 Council Email

The Clerk to the Parish Council has the following email addresses;
dickensheathpc@hotmail.com or clerk@dickenheathpc.org.uk

Parish Council staff work part time 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 Councillors, agencies for information and/or action. Generally communications on behalf of the Parish Council will 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 up with a request for consent for this to be done.

Individual Parish Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views with, if appropriate, copy to the Clerk. Note: any emails copied to the Clerk become official and subject to The Freedom of Information Act.

Without permission, do not forward personal information on to other people or groups outside of the Parish 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 Parish 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.

Parish Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act 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. Parish 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.

Dickens Heath Parish Council
Adopted on July 14th 2020