



GNOSALL PARISH COUNCIL

(Including the Wards of Moreton and Knightley)

Clerk of the Council:
Miss J Cooper
The Grosvenor Centre, High Street
Gnosall, Stafford ST20 0EX



Tel: 01785 822685
E-mail:
clerk@gnosallparishcouncil.org.uk
www.gnosallparishcouncil.org.uk

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, a Facebook Page and uses E-mail 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.

The Council's Facebook Page provides for information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our Parish, and promotes 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 we do not own the copyright.
- Not contain any personal information.
- Official Council business 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.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Council's Facebook Page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives, the following guidelines are to be respected.

- 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 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 site for commercial purposes or to advertise market or sell products.

The site is not monitored 24/7 and therefore it will not be able to reply immediately to all messages or comments received. However, the Council 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/post via Facebook will not be considered as formally contacting the Council for official purposes and the Council 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 and/or members of the Council by E-mail.

The Council retains 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.
- Alleges a breach of Council's policy or the law.
- Material to be deemed by the Clerk/Chair or Vice Chair to be offensive

The Council's response to any communication received not meeting the above criteria will be to either ignore it, 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 the Council's 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 the 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 Website.

Where necessary, anyone contacting the Council may be referred to the Council's website to see the required information, or their query referred to one of the Parish Councillors for consideration and response. The Council may not be able respond to every comment received, particularly during periods of heavy workloads.

The 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 with the Council's 'Rules and Expectations' for the Website. The Council reserves the right to remove any or all of a local group's information from the Website if it considers that the content does not meet with the Council's 'Rules and Expectations' for its Website. Where content on the Website is maintained by a local group it must be clearly stated that such content is not the direct responsibility of the Council.

Parish Council E-mail

Formal contact with the Parish Council can be made by E-mail using the Clerk to the Council's E-mail address (Clerk's E-mail address)

The Clerk's E-mail account is monitored during office hours, and the Council aims to reply to all questions received as soon as possible. An 'Out of Office' message will be used when appropriate.

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with E-mail 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, otherwise they will always be copied to the Clerk. All new E-mails requiring data to be passed on to a third party, will be followed up with a Data Consent Form for completion before action is taken with that correspondence.

Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views and, if appropriate, copy to the Clerk. NB all E-mails copied to the Parish Clerk will 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 SMS messages.

Video Conferencing e.g. Skype

This policy also applies to communication using video conferencing technology and platforms.

Internal communication and access to information within the Council

The Council continually looks at ways to improve its working practises 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 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 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 'Carbon Copy – cc' essential recipients on E-mails, avoiding the use of the 'Reply to All' option if at all possible. Only copying in all who need to know and ensuring that E-mail trails have been removed.