

Electronic Communication (Email), Website and Social Media Policy

14 June 2018

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.

This policy also recognises the Council's duty to comply with GDPR (the General Data Protection Regulations). Councillors and the Clerk are expected to maintain an awareness of the confidentiality of information that they have access to and not to share confidential information with anyone.

In all their work for the Council, including email and social media, Councillors must abide by the Code of Conduct. The key to whether social media activity (or any activity) is subject to the Code of Conduct is whether the Councillor is giving the impression that he/she is acting as a Councillor. It is helpful to remember that the Code of Conduct is based on and guided by the General Principles of Public Life:

- Selflessness
- Honesty and integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Leadership
- Personal judgement
- Respect for others
- Duty to uphold the law
- Stewardship

If your email or social media post does not reflect these principles, it is possible you are breaking the Code of Conduct.

Parish Council email

The Clerk's email address is always: clerk@luxulyanpc.co.uk. The Clerk works part time and the email account is not necessarily monitored daily. For this reason, there might not be a quick response and one should not be expected.

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and for 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.

Please note that any emails copied to the Clerk become official and will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act.

Due care will be taken with personal information in accordance with GDPR.

'Reply All', 'Forward', email 'conversations' and email 'chains'.

The Council recognises that certain devices or applications make it difficult to control which email address is chosen when a person has multiple email addresses; make it difficult when forwarding to see everyone who is copied in to an email; and make it difficult to erase email 'chains' included in the same conversation. Nevertheless, Councillors and the Clerk must follow GDPR; must be in control of their part in an electronic conversation and, therefore, should do their best to ensure that redundant information and/or recipients are deleted from email chains.

Councillors and the Clerk should not forward personal information to people or groups outside of the Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

Councillor Email

It is encouraged, not required, that Councillors use a separate and distinct email address for Council business.

Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views. Councillors should copy the Clerk in to any email about a Council matter. This will ensure that a complete and proper record is kept of all correspondence.

Parish Council Website – www.luxulyanpc.co.uk

The Clerk to the Council is delegated to maintain the website with current and relevant information for statutory compliance and practical use. While it is important to keep the website up to date, it is not the Clerk's first priority. It is important that this policy recognises that other workload may delay changes or updates.

The Council has voluntarily resolved to comply with the Transparency Code for Smaller Councils and uses the council's website to post the necessary information and documents.

Where necessary, the Clerk or Councillors may direct queries to the website for information.

Facebook

The Council Facebook page intends to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our Parish/Town and 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 we do not have permission;
- Not contain any personal information.
- Content will be uploaded and moderated primarily by the Clerk to the Council, or the Chair/Vice-chair of the Council if the Clerk is unavailable.
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the 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 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.
- The Council's Facebook page may not be used for commercial purposes or to advertise, market or sell products.

Please note:

- The site is not monitored 24/7 and we will not always be able to reply individually to all 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 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 via email or post.

The Council's response to any communication received which does not meet the criteria in this policy will be to either:

- ignore,
- inform the sender of our policy, or
- send a brief response as appropriate.

We retain the right to remove comments or content that does not comply with this policy or alleges a breach of the Council's policy or the law.

The response will be at the Clerk's discretion, based on the message received, given the Council's limited resources available. If necessary, the Clerk will consult with the Chair or Vice-chair. Any information posted on the Facebook page not in line with this policy 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, to Cornwall Council's Standards Committee or report the matter to the Police as soon as possible to allow due process.

Councillor social media accounts.

Councillors should not use their personal social media accounts (including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or other social media apps) for Council business or to discuss council matters. Councillors may have separate accounts that clearly show that they are set up in their capacity as a Parish Councillor and will be used for Council business and issues. Parish Councillor social media accounts must be public and open and, therefore, must not be used with private groups.

Other Electronic and Social Media

Other social media accounts may be set up by the Clerk in the name of the Parish Council with a resolution from the Parish Council.

SMS (texting) and Messaging

Councillors and the Clerk may use SMS texts or 'messaging' 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.

Twitter, etc

If the Council should decide to use a Twitter account, or another similar medium, all are reminded that this policy also applies to such messages.

ADOPTED BY THE PARISH COUNCIL: 14 June 2018

SIGNED: *Michaela Linfoot*

Chair to Luxulyan Parish Council