

Shadingfield, Sotterley, Willingham & Ellough Joint Parish Council

Social Media Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance on acceptable behaviour in the use of the internet and email - including the use of social media both during and out of work and that it is consistent with the Council's Employee Code of Conduct, Acceptable Use policies, Risk Management Strategy and professional best practices. Nothing in this policy should be read as restricting the proper use of Internet, email and social media for work purposes. This policy forms part of SSWE jt. Parish Council's Code of Conduct and applies to all Councillors and the Clerk when using e-mail, text or social media. Text and WhatsApp are primarily for communications between Councillors and the Clerk. WhatsApp has been adopted to communicate urgent messages and alerts that might not be picked up in a timely manner if sent by e-mail.

Councillors should copy all Council-related e-mails and messages to the Clerk.

Councillors are strongly encouraged to have a separate e-mail address for Council business.

When using electronic methods to correspond with other Councillors, the Clerk, residents and local businesses and/or District and County Councils/Councillors, please have regard to the following:

Risks:

- Breach of Data Protection legislation and GDPR 2018;
- ?? Summons for presentation to tribunals/courts;
- Legal action being taken for defamation
- Subsequent need for the Council or Councillors to have to make a disclosure under a Freedom of Information request;
- Disenfranchise the public by conducting business remotely (this especially applies to planning applications);
- Non-compliance with the democratic process.

Do not:

- Use language that could offend, discriminate or cause embarrassment;
- Discuss business that should not be seen/heard by the public;
- Infringe copyright;
- Enter into contractual commitments or make representations by e-mail unless appropriate authority has been obtained;
- Send e-mails that you would not want a third party to read, whether by design or accident;
- Post material which could create embarrassment for yourself or the Council or create a risk outlined above
- Make statements likely to cause embarrassment or create liability for you or the Council.

Etiquette

- Do not write in capitals;
- Use proper spelling, grammar and punctuation;
- Be polite and respectful – no profanity, please;
- Use basic courtesy;
- Do not bully or harass;
- Do not engage in politics or political diatribe;
- Do not use the Council's groups/lists for circulating jokes, memes, or other material irrelevant to the business of the Council.

Social media and text are primarily to be used for short, time-critical purposes including, but not limited to:

- local issues such as extreme weather or major fire that could require us to offer our residents assistance or support;
- short notice changes to meeting arrangements;
- to alert others that an urgent e-mail has been sent and requires action.

The Clerk will be the administrator of all circulation groups.

If in doubt about whether your communication is suitable for circulation, ask yourself

“Would I be happy for my Granny, Children or the Vicar to read this?”

Date of adoption: 21 February 2024	Chair: C Ellis
Date of next review: 2026	Clerk: S C Blackburn