



Aldworth Parish Council

Media Policy

Adopted: 15th March 2021 ~ Reviewed: 9th May 2023 ~ Minute ref: 001/090523/AMPC

The Press

Where contact with the press is necessary, individual Councillors and the Clerk will decline to comment and will direct any enquiry to the nominated persons within the Parish Council who will respond accordingly

Social Media & Electronic Communication Policy

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables Aldworth 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, a 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 and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur, this Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

Our rules and expectations:

We promise that any communications from the Parish 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, other than necessary basic contact details;
- if official council business it will be moderated by either the Chair of the Parish Council or the Clerk to the Parish Council.
- social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising

Equally, we expect any communications to the Parish Council to meet the following criteria:

- be civil, tasteful, and relevant;

- not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented, or racially offensive;
- not contain content copied from elsewhere, for which the enquirer does not own the copyright;
- not sending large volumes of the same message (also called "spamming");
- not to contain anyone's personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;

The Parish Council's response to any communications 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 our Facebook page not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible.

Repeat offenders will be blocked from the social media page.

Channels and responsibilities

Parish Council website

Where necessary, we may direct those contacting us to visit our website to see the required information, or we may forward their question to one of our Parish Councillors for consideration and response.

We may not respond to every comment we receive particularly if we are experiencing a heavy workload.

The Parish 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 Clerk would be responsible for maintaining the content and ensuring that it meets the Parish Council's "rules and expectation" (see above) for the web site.

Parish Council email

The Clerk / Finance Officer have their own council email address. These email accounts are monitored mainly during office hours, Monday to Thursday (2 hours on a Monday and 1 hour Tuesday through to Thursday), 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 any on to the relevant Member or external agency to action.

All communications on behalf of the Council must come from the Clerk or the Chair.

Individual councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with Parishioners in relation to their own personal views, if appropriate, copy to the Clerk. NB: any emails copied to the Clerk 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.

SMS (texting) / WhatsApp

Members and the Clerk may use SMS or WhatsApp as a convenient way to communicate at times.

All are reminded that this policy also applies to such messages.

Facebook Account

The Clerk has sole responsibility for uploading content to our Facebook Page. Other Councillors with access to Facebook can be added as 'Admin' to the Facebook page and will have the ability to post content and communications. This will also provide additional security should any personal account become suspended.

All posts and content added to our social media pages must follow our rules and regulations (see above).

The Clerk and any Councillor with access to these pages reserves the right to remove any offensive comments, photographs, and language.

Internal communication and access to information within the Parish 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 "our rules and expectation" section (see above) 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 all information that they have access to and not to share that information with anyone unless they are sure that it is reasonable to do so. Failure to properly observe confidentiality may be seen as a breach of the Parish 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 All' option if at all possible.