

CHARVIL PARISH COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The use of digital and social media now enables better and more direct contact between Charvil Parish Council, the parishioners and businesses it serves, and the agencies it works and liaises with. Social media is a collective term for the ways to create and publish information via the internet and, for the purposes of this policy, refers to the Parish Council website, Facebook page and Twitter only. This policy details how Charvil Parish Council will use social media to improve and expand the ways in which it communicates with its local residents, local businesses and the various government agencies it deals with.

Social media provides an alternative channel to written correspondence, telephone and face to face conversation, to enable the Parish Council to inform and respond to questions and queries raised by people who live in, work in and visit the parish. It also enables the Parish Council to deal more efficiently with the various agencies that deliver services to local people. Use of digital and social media will form an integral part of how the Parish Council delivers its services in a way that improves communication between the Parish Council and the people, businesses and agencies it serves and works with.

Charvil Parish Council has a corporate presence on the web and an e-mail channel which it uses to communicate with residents, as well as those working in and visiting the parish. The Parish Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications, and the Clerk and/or Members may ask for a preferred channel of communication. Over time the Parish Council may add to and/or change the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur this Social Media Policy will be updated.

Councillors must remember that any personal opinions expressed on their own Facebook/Twitter feeds regarding Parish matters, may be interpreted as the view of the Council, or could lead to accusations of having prejudicial interests if these comments are on a controversial topic yet to be discussed at a Council meeting.

SOCIAL MEDIA

All communications from Charvil Parish Council will meet the following criteria:

- Be civil respectful 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 it does not own the copyright;
- Not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;
- Will be moderated by the Clerk to the Parish Council or any nominated Councillor;
- Will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

All communications to the Parish Council should meet the following criteria:

- Be civil, respectful 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 contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;
- Will not seek to disseminate any political advertising.

The Clerk to the Council is responsible for approving and arranging publication of content on the website, Twitter and Facebook page. On occasion, requests for information may be forwarded to a Councillor(s) for their consideration and response, which will then be directed back via the Clerk to the Council.

Facebook: The Parish Council may choose to respond to a comment received, particularly if one response can be considered to address all. The Parish Council may permit local organisations to maintain a presence on its Facebook page, subject to their adherence to the criteria detailed above. In such cases, the content must be clearly identified as not from the Parish Council. The Clerk to the Council, together with a nominated councillor, reserves the right to remove any information considered to be in breach of the above.

Twitter: The Parish Council may choose to re-tweet comments that mention the Parish Council Website. The Parish Council's website is an integral part of the Parish Council, and its purpose is to communicate with Charvil residents, local clubs, societies and organisations as well as external bodies including Wokingham Borough Council and Local and/or Central Government organisations. The Parish Council will aim to ensure that all information within its website is up-to-date and relevant.

The following items may be included:

- Information on village clubs, societies, organisations and events;
- Links to the following external websites:
 - . Wokingham Borough Council,
 - . Healthwatch,
- Links to approved charities (as requested);
- Parish Council agendas;
- Parish Council Minutes;
- Parish Council Committees' Minutes;
- Parish Council Financial Information as permitted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (as amended);
- Parish Council Policies and Procedures;
- Parish Council members' information.

Other items may be included at the Clerk's discretion, and any items for publication on the website should be emailed to the Clerk to the Council at clerk@charvil.com.

The following will NOT be included:

- Articles affiliated to or promoting any political organisation;
- Publicity for any non-charitable fund-raising event.

The Clerk to the Council and will treat all information confidentially, securely and sensitively. Failure to observe this may be seen as a breach of the Parish Council's 'Code of Conduct' and will be dealt with through its prescribed procedures.

Emails: Charvil Parish Council maintains email addresses for the Clerk (clerk@charvil.com) and Assistant Clerk (bookings@charvil.com) which are reviewed daily during the working week. The Clerk to the Council is responsible for dealing with all emails received and will forward to a Councillor(s) or external agency, or respond as appropriate.

Charvil Parish Council

Specific Guidelines for Councillors' Use of Social Media

1. These guidelines are intended to supplement and not replace the Code of Conduct which remains as definitive.
2. Social media links on the Charvil Parish Council website can provide a valuable means for Councillors to communicate with a wide cross-section of parishioners, but care needs to be taken in the way it is used. These guidelines aim to avoid some potential problems. They are not exhaustive and do not replace the need for Councillors to display the same courtesy and common sense when posting on Facebook, Twitter etc. as elsewhere.
3. Social media postings may be read by anyone and may be taken out of context. Postings should be clear and unambiguous and any necessary context or background should be explained or referred to. It is worth re-reading what you have typed and asking yourself "Is this clear?" before you submit it.
4. Consider whether your posting could be misinterpreted, either because the reader is not aware of the background or the context of a posting, or deliberately, to put you or the Council in a bad light.
5. Do not feel obliged to respond to a thread if you do not have anything constructive to add.

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