



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. Introduction

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables Bugbrooke Parish Council to communicate effectively with residents, businesses, and partner organisations, supporting transparency and engagement.

Bugbrooke Parish Council currently uses:

- **Website:** www.bugbrookeparishcouncil.gov.uk
- **Facebook:** www.facebook.com/bugbrookeparishcouncil & Bugbrooke Village Page
- **Email communication**

The Parish Council will always seek to use the most effective communication channels. These will be reviewed periodically, and this policy updated as required.

2. Purpose of Social Media

The Parish Council uses social media to:

- Provide information and updates about Parish Council activities
- Promote community initiatives and events
- Signpost residents to relevant services and organisations
- Increase transparency of the Parish Council work

Social media will not be used for:

- Making decisions or conducting Parish Council business
- Formal consultations or statutory notices
- Handling complaints, service requests, or official correspondence

3. Legal and Governance Framework

This policy operates in accordance with:

- Local Government Act 1972
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- UK General Data Protection Regulation

All social media activity must also comply with the Parish Council's Code of Conduct and Data Protection Policy.

4. Management and Responsibilities

The Parish Clerk is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Council's social media and digital communications.

The following individuals are authorised to post official content:

- The Clerk
- The Chair
- The Vice-Chair

All content must:

- Reflect agreed and minuted Council decisions where appropriate
- Be factual, accurate, and unbiased
- Maintain the Council's neutral and non-political position

5. Facebook Use

The Parish Council's Facebook page is used primarily as **a one-way communication channel** to ensure clarity, consistency, and appropriate governance.

This approach:

- Prevents informal debate outside formal Council processes
- Ensures equality of access for residents not using social media
- Reduces legal and reputational risks

Accordingly:

- Comments are disabled on Council posts
- The Council does not routinely monitor or respond to tags or messages
- Social media is not monitored continuously

All posts will:

- Be civil, respectful, and relevant
- Not contain personal or confidential information
- Comply with copyright and data protection laws
- Avoid political content or bias

6. Public Interaction and Moderation

Where interaction occurs (e.g. tagging or shared content), Bugbrooke Parish Council reserves the right to remove content that includes:

- Obscene, abusive, or discriminatory language
- Personal attacks or defamatory statements
- Misinformation or misleading claims
- Breaches of privacy or data protection
- Commercial promotions or spam
- Content unrelated to Parish Council matters

Content will be removed if possible as quickly as reasonably practicable. Repeat offenders may be blocked.

7. Contacting the Parish Council

Social media is not a formal communication channel.

Residents should contact the Parish Council via:

- Email: parishclerk@bugbrookeparishcouncil.gov.uk
- Website contact form
- Letter

The Council aims to respond within 5 working days of receipt.

Social media must not be used for:

- Reporting emergencies
- Submitting formal complaints
- Making Freedom of Information requests

8. Parish Council Website

Bugbrooke Parish Council website is the primary source of official information.

Enquiries submitted via the website will normally receive a response within 5 working days.

9. Email Communication

The Clerk manages all official Parish Council correspondence.

- Councillors will be provided with a Parish Council email address
- Councillors should use only this address for Council business
- Communications may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000

All users must:

- Maintain confidentiality
- Avoid sharing personal data without consent
- Follow appropriate email practices (e.g. limiting “reply all”)

This ensures a complete and accurate record of Council communications.

10. Councillor Conduct on Social Media

Parish Councillors must adhere to the Code of Conduct at all times when using social media.

Councillors must:

- Clearly distinguish between personal views and Council positions
- Not imply they are speaking on behalf of the Council unless authorised
- Not disclose confidential or sensitive information

Predetermination:

Councillors must not express opinions on matters (e.g. planning applications) that may later come before the Parish Council for decision, as this could compromise impartiality and decision-making.

If commenting on Parish Council-related matters:

- Councillors must do so in a personal capacity only
- Posts must clearly state they are personal views

Only the Clerk, Chair, and Vice-Chair may issue official responses, and only to reflect agreed Council positions.

11. Data Protection and Records Management

All communications must comply with data protection legislation.

- Personal data must not be shared via social media
- Social media content may form part of official Council records
- The Council may retain records (including screenshots) for governance, audit, or legal purposes

12. Internal Communication and Information Security

Parish Councillors must:

- Maintain confidentiality of all sensitive information
- Handle information securely
- Share information only where appropriate and authorised

Failure to comply may constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct and could result in formal action.

13. Emergency Communications

In exceptional circumstances (e.g. severe weather, public safety issues), the Parish Council may use social media to share urgent information.

Such communications will:

- Be factual and verified
- Direct residents to appropriate authorities or emergency services

14. Accessibility and Inclusivity

The Parish Council will ensure that communications:

- Are clear, concise, and in plain English
- Do not rely solely on digital channels
- Provide alternative methods of contact for residents

15. Training and Guidance

Councillors and staff may be provided with guidance or training on appropriate use of social media to ensure compliance with this policy and relevant legislation.

16. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or when significant changes to communication practices or legislation occur.

Approved and adopted by Bugbrooke Parish Council

Signed: _____ Chair

Date: 11th May 2026