

Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy



February 2018

Coxhoe Parish Council Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy.

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables Coxhoe 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, Facebook page, Twitter account 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.

Coxhoe Parish Council Facebook pages and Twitter account intends to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within Coxhoe Parish and promote our community positively.

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/Vice 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.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Coxhoe Parish 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 abuse of language will not be tolerated.
- Differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including Coxhoe Parish Council members or staff, will not be permitted.
- Share freely and be generous, but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.
- Stay on topic.
- Refrain from using the Council's Facebook page or Twitter site for commercial purposes or to advertise market or sell products.

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 endeavor 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 or Twitter 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 and/or members of the council by emailing clerk@coxhoeparishcouncil.gov.uk or phoning 07988 283287. See our full contact details on www.coxhoeparishcouncil.gov.uk to.

We retain the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- Obscene or racist content
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language
- Potentially libelous statements
- Plagiarised material; any material in violation of any laws, including copyright

- Private, personal information published without consent
- Information or links unrelated to the content of the forum
- Commercial promotions or spam
- alleges a breach of a Council's policy or the law

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 the Facebook page not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. Repeat offenders will be blocked from the Facebook page. CPC 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 or report the matter to the Police as soon as possible to allow due process.

Parish Council website.

Where necessary, we may direct those contacting us to 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 local group would be responsible for maintaining the content and ensuring that it meets the Parish Council's 'rules and expectation' (see previous page) for the web site. The Parish Council reserves the right to remove any or all of a local group's information from the web site if it feels that content does not meet the Parish Council's 'rules and expectation' for its web site.

Where content on the web site is maintained by a local group it should be clearly marked that such content is not the direct responsibility of the Parish Council.

Parish Council email.

The Clerk to the council has their own council email address (clerk@coxhoeparishcouncil.gov.uk). The email account is monitored mainly during office hours, Monday to Friday, and we aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as we can. An 'out of office' message should be used when appropriate.

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and 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 otherwise will always be copied to the Clerk.

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).

Members and the Clerk may use SMS as a convenient way to communicate at times. All are reminded that this policy also applies to such messages.

Videoconferencing e.g. Skype.

If this medium is used to communicate please note that this policy also applies to the use of videoconferencing.

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 information that they have access to and not to share confidential information with anyone. 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 to All' option if at all possible, but of course copying in all who need to know.

This policy for Social Media and Electronic Communication was formally adopted by the Council at its meeting on 7th February 2018.

Signed:

Chairman of the Council