

OARE PARISH COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

Adopted: April 2022

Reviewed: May 2025

Introduction

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables Oare Parish Council to interact in a way that improves the communications both within the council and between the council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

The council has a website (www.oareparishcouncil.org), has administration access to the Oare Parish Council Facebook page, and uses email to communicate.

The council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time the 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.

Facebook

The Facebook page is available to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within the parish and to promote our community positively.

Communications from the council will:

- 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 without permission;
- not contain any personal information;
- be moderated by the clerk and any other councillors who may be given administration access, as agreed at a council meeting;
- not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

Communications from other users will be allowed, but in order to ensure that all discussions on the council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the council's aims and objectives, we retain the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- obscene or racist content;
- personal attacks, insults, or threatening language;
- potentially libellous or defamatory 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;
- allegations of a breach of a Council's policy or the law.

Such content may, at the council's discretion, be removed, ignored or given a brief response. Repeat offenders may be blocked.

The site is not monitored 24 hours a day and we will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, we will endeavour 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 or posting via Facebook 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 clerk (oarepc@aol.co.uk) and/or members of the council by sending an email or letter.

Website

The parish council website will be updated regularly by the clerk and will contain all information required by legislation as well as other items of relevance to the community.

Email

All councillors and the clerk have specific parish council email addresses. The main council account (oarepc@aol.co.uk) is monitored mainly during office hours, Monday to Friday, but on a part-time basis. However, we aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as we can. An 'out of office' message is 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. In the event that a councillor communicates on behalf of the council, such communications should always be copied to the clerk. These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept. Any emails sent to or from the clerk or councillors in their official capacity will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act in all their work on behalf of the 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. 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. Personal information must not be forwarded on to other people or groups outside the council; this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers. Failure to properly observe confidentiality may be seen as a breach of the council's Code of Conduct and will be dealt with through its prescribed procedures (at the extreme it may also involve a criminal investigation). Councillors should also be careful only to cc essential recipients on emails but of course copy in all who need to know and ensuring that email trails have been removed.

This policy will be reviewed annually.