



KIRKBYMOORSIDE TOWN COUNCIL

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Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables the Town 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, 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.

The Council Facebook pages intend to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our Town and promote our community positively.

Communications from the 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;
- If it is official Council business it will be moderated by either the Chair/Vice Chair of the Council or the Clerk to the Council;
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives, the council 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 the Council members or staff, will not be permitted;
- Share freely and be generous with official Council posts, 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 for commercial purposes or to advertise, market or sell products.

The site is not monitored 24/7 and the Council will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, the Council 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/post via Facebook will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and the Council will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through these channels. Instead, please make direct contact with the Town Clerk and/or members of the Council by emailing.

The Council retain the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- Obscene or racist content;
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language;
- Potentially libellous 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 Council's response to any communication received not meeting the above criteria will be to either ignore, inform the sender of the policy or send a brief response as appropriate. This will be at the Council's discretion based on the message received, given the 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. The Council 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.

Town Council Website

Where necessary, the Council may direct members of the public to the Town Council website to see the required information, or the question may be forward to a Councillor(s) for consideration and response. The Council may not respond to every comment received particularly if they are experiencing a heavy workload.

The 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 Council's 'rules and expectations' for the website. The Council reserves the right to remove any or all of a local group's information from the website if it feels that the content does not meet the Council's 'rules and expectations' for its website. Where content on the website is maintained by a local group it should be clearly marked that such content is not the direct responsibility of the Council.

Town Council email

The Town Clerk has their own council email address town.clerk@kirkbymoorsidetowncouncil.gov.uk The email account is monitored mainly during office hours, Monday to Friday, and the Council aims to respond to all emails as soon as possible. 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/or 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.

Do not forward personal information on to other people or groups outside of the Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

SMS (texting).

The Town Council does not issue mobile phones to members of the Council or its employees. Any exchange of communication by SMS is considered to be private and not the business of the Council.

Video Conferencing e.g. Skype.

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

Internal communication and access to information within the Council.

The 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.

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. 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).

Members are encouraged to blind copy (Bcc) essential recipients on emails and should also be careful only to cc essential recipients on emails who have consented for their email address to be disclosed to the recipients of the message 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 and ensuring that email trails have been removed.

To be reviewed as and when appropriate.