

Nash Mills Parish Council

SOCIAL MEDIA & ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

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Nash Mills Parish Council (draft v3)

SOCIAL MEDIA & ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Introduction

The use of digital and social media now enables better and more direct contact between Nash Mills Parish Council (“the 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 purpose of this policy currently refers to the Parish Council website, Facebook page, Instagram and Twitter accounts only and how they will be used. Any new channels adopted in future must also conform to this policy.

Social media provides an alternative channel to written correspondence, telephone and face to face conversation to enable the 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 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 Council delivers its services in a way that improves communication between the Council and the people, businesses and agencies it serves and works with. This policy governs that activity.

The Council has a corporate presence on the web and an email channel which it uses to communicate with residents, as well as those working in and visiting the parish. The Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications, and the Clerk and/or Councillors may ask for a preferred channel of communication.

All Electronic Communications and Social Media content

All communications from the Council will uphold the Nolan Principles and adhere to the Council adopted Code of Conduct. They will meet the following criteria:

- Be civil respectful and relevant
- Will reflect the Council view (not individual views)
- 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 (and nominated Councillors)
- 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, we ask all contributors to follow these guidelines:

- Be civil, respectful and relevant

- Not include content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive
- Not include content copied from elsewhere for which the enquirer does not own the copyright
- Not include any personal/private information, other than necessary basic contact details
- Will not seek to disseminate any political advertising

Our sites are not monitored 24 hours a day and we will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received via Facebook or Twitter, however, we will endeavour to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people or authorities. We may not respond to every comment that we receive depending on workload.

Sending a message or posting 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. Anyone who does so should instead be invited to make direct contact with the Council's Clerk (clerk@nashmillsparishcouncil.gov.uk) and/or Councillors by sending an email or letter.

Moderation

The Council 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;

Only the Clerk and nominated Councillors are responsible for approving and arranging publication of content to the website, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook page. On occasion requests for information may be forwarded to a Councillor for their consideration and response, which will then be directed back via the Clerk.

Facebook:

The Clerk (or nominated Councillors) reserve the right to remove any information considered in breach of the above criteria

The Facebook page will be designed to foster community engagement, interaction and information sharing.

No politically motivated posts will be posted by NMPC.

The page will be set up using the parish clerks email address only.

Photo albums will be open however no images of children (showing a direct view of their face) will be displayed without the prior written consent of the guardian.

Those 'liking' our Facebook page will not be able to post content directly on the page but will be permitted to comment on posts created by the Council.

Twitter:

The Council may choose to re-tweet comments that mention the Council or relate to its activities.

Instagram:

The above procedures will also apply to the Council Instagram account.

Website

The Council's website is an integral part of the Council communication channels. Its purpose is to communicate with residents, local clubs, societies and organisations as well as external bodies including Council and Local and/or Central Government organisations. The Council will aim to ensure that all information within the website is up to date and relevant. On occasions we may direct those contacting us to our website to see the required information. The following items may be included: -

- Information on village clubs, societies and organisations and events
- Links to the following external websites (Dacorum Borough Council)
- Links to approved charities (as requested)
- Parish Council agendas
- Parish Council minutes
- Parish Council committee minutes
- Parish Council financial information as permitted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (as amended)
- Parish Council policies and procedures
- Parish Council Councillors information

Other items may be included at the Clerk's discretion, and any items for consideration for publication on the website should be emailed to the Clerk at Clerk@nashmillsparishcouncil.gov.uk

The following **WILL NOT** be included:

- Articles affiliated to, or promoting any political organisation

- Commercial advertisements
- Publicity for any non-charitable fund-raising event.

Emails

The Council maintains one email address which is reviewed during office hours, which are displayed on the Council's website.

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with all emails received and may forward to a member or external agency or respond as appropriate. All communications on behalf of the Council should come from the Clerk or be copied to the Clerk. Any emails sent to the Clerk or Councillors in their official capacity will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (as amended). The objective of this procedure is to ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

Our use of electronic communication is bound by the general data protection regulation as detailed in our GDPR policies and to ensure compliance with this emails containing personal information must not be forwarded to other people or groups outside of the Council, including but not exclusively names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

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 communication is a major factor in delivering improvement.

Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct, the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 in all their communication 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).

Councillors should avoid unnecessary group email communications, only sending to essential recipients on emails and avoiding use of the 'Reply to All' option if possible, but of course copying in all who need to know and ensuring that email trails have been removed as necessary.

This policy was adopted at a meeting and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate.