

BURGHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

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Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

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

The Parish Council Facebook account intends to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within the Parish and promote the 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 Parish Council business it will be moderated by either the Chair/Vice Chair of the Parish Council or the Parish Clerk;
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Parish Council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Parish Council's aims and objectives, we ask you to follow these guidelines:

- Be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarity, threats or abusive language will not be tolerated.
- Differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including Parish Council members or staff, will not be permitted.
- Share freely and be generous with official Parish Council posts, but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.
- Stay on topic.
- Refrain from using the Parish Council's Facebook 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 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 Parish 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 Parish Council's Clerk and/or members of the council by emailing burghfieldclerk@gmail.com

We 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 Parish Council's policy or the law

The Parish Council's response to any communication 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 Parish Council's discretion based on the message received, given our limited resources available. Any information posted that is not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. Repeat offenders will be blocked from the account. The Parish 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 Parish Council 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 ensuring it meets the Parish Council's 'rules and expectation' 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 the content does not meet the Parish Council's 'rules and expectation' 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 Parish Council.

Parish Council email

The Clerk to the Parish Council has a council email address (burghfieldclerk@gmail.com) 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 will 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 Parish Council will usually come from the Clerk, and/or otherwise will always be copied to the Parish Clerk. All new emails requiring data to be passed on will be followed up with a data consent form for completion before action is taken with that correspondence. Individual Parish Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views, and if appropriate, copy to the Parish Clerk. NB: any emails copied to the Parish 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 Parish Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

SMS (texting)

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

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 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.