

## **DODDINGHURST PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Social Media Policy**

#### **Introduction**

The use of digital and social media now has a clear and compelling impact on all areas of local government enabling better and more direct contact between the Parish Council, the people and businesses it serves and the agencies that it works with.

This Social Media Policy aims to describe how the Parish Council will use social media to improve and expand the ways in which it communicates internally, with its local residents, local businesses and the various government (local and central) agencies that it deals with.

Social media provide alternative channels (to written correspondence, telephone and face to face conversation) for the Parish Council to inform and respond to questions and queries raised by people who live in, work in and visit the parish of Doddinghurst. It also enables the Parish Council to deal more efficiently with the various agencies (e.g. the surrounding parishes, district council and the county council) that deliver services to local people.

#### **The Social Media Policy**

Use of digital and social media will form an integral part of how Doddinghurst Parish Council delivers its services 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 corporate presence on the web and an e-mail channel which it uses to communicate with people who live in, work in, and visit the Parish of Doddinghurst.

The Parish Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. We may ask those who contact us for their preferred channel of communication when we deal with them.

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 Social Media Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

#### **Our rules and expectation**

Most online communities have their own rules and guidelines, which we will always abide by.

We promise that any communications (this includes all content on the Parish Council's website) from the Parish Council will meet the following criteria:

- be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;

- not contain content subject to copyright;
- not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;
- will be moderated either by the Clerk/ Officers of the Parish Council or a councillor appointed to do so;
- social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising

Equally, we expect any communications to the Parish Council to meet the following criteria:

- be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- 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 publisher does not own the copyright;
- not send large volumes of the same message;
- not to contain anyone's personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;

### **Channels and responsibilities - Parish Council website**

Our web site is hosted by e-voice and is normally continuously available. The Parish Council will maintain one web site <https://e-voice.org.uk/doddinghurst-pc/>

The Clerk, or other officer appointed to the role, is responsible for publishing content on the 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 a presence on its website for the purpose of presenting community information about the group's activities. The local group would be responsible for advising the Clerk of updates to 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 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 e-mail channel**

Our e-mail account is monitored throughout the week, and we aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as we can and within 5 working days. The Parish Council will maintain one e-mail address, currently it is, [clerk@doddinghurst-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@doddinghurst-pc.gov.uk)

The Clerk to the Parish Council/ appointed officers are responsible for dealing with e-mail received and passing it on to the relevant Councillor or external agency to deal with.

The recognised procedure for the sending of e-mails from the Parish Council to local residents, businesses and organisations is that they will be sent by the Clerk, Deputy Clerk or RFO to the Parish Council. Where parish councillors need to communicate with local residents, businesses and organisations they should, preferably, keep to the recognised procedure by sending their e-mail to the Clerk to the Parish Council. Where, for reasons of urgency, it is necessary to reply directly to an external email enquiry all such outgoing e-mails must be copied to the Clerk to the Parish Council to ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

#### **Parish Council Twitter channel**

Currently the Parish Council does not operate a Twitter channel.

#### **Parish Council Facebook channel**

Doddinghurst Parish Council does have a Facebook page for the publication of information relating to the operation of the Parish Council.

#### **Parish Council YouTube channel**

Currently the Parish Council does not operate a YouTube channel.

#### **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 is a major factor in delivering improvement.

Parish Councillors are expected to abide by the “our rules and expectation” section (shown earlier in this document) in all their work on behalf of the Parish Council. As more and more information is 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 all information that they have access to and not to share that information with anyone unless they are sure that it is reasonable to do so. 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).

**Approved for issue at the Full Council meeting of the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021**