

WEST PARLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Information and Communication Technology Policy

Social Media, Email, Networking

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is central to everything that the Parish Council does. It is integral in the day to day running of the Council.
- 1.2 Social media offers a range of opportunities for local councils to use the internet to communicate and engage with local residents.
- 1.3 The Parish Council can make use of social media to:-
 - Improve communication
 - Increase participation in Council work
 - Help change the culture of the Council, to be more open, transparent and collaborative
 - Reduce costs
- 1.4 Social Networking is an effective method for Council to interact with parishioners. Used effectively, they can engage those who would not normally have access to local councillors.
- 1.5 It is vital that all parties are aware of the safeguarding issues surrounding the use of ICT.

2. Legal considerations:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 1988
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- Defamation Act 2013
- The Parish Council's Code of Conduct
- Other Parish Council's policies

3. Acceptable Use of ICT for Councillors

- 3.1 All Councillors must take responsibility for their own actions when using the internet and email, and must exercise care and consideration at all times.
- 3.2 It is the personal responsibility of every Councillor to take all reasonable steps to make sure they follow the conditions set out in this policy.
- 3.3 Any comments made on social media should not represent or purport to represent the Parish Council on the internet. Postings about the Parish Council or individuals within the Council are not allowed.

4. Data Protection and Monitoring

- 4.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer may, at any time, monitor social media use by Members.
- 4.2 The Parish Council has a legal duty to meet regulations of Data Protection legislation.

5. Intellectual Property

- 5.1 The use of intellectual property belonging to the Parish Council is strictly forbidden outside of official capacity. This includes the use of the Parish Council and Community Hub logo.
- 5.2 All Members are reminded that the title of Councillor belongs to the Parish Council.

6. Social Media

- 6.1 The Parish Council operates a Facebook Page which is administered by the Parish Clerk, along with one/two named parish councillors as administrators (where social media sites allow). They will be responsible for posting and monitoring the content, ensuring it complies with the social media policy.

The administrators have the right to remove any posts or content that includes:

- Obscene, racist or abusive content
- Personal attacks, insults or threatening language
- Potentially libellous statements
- Any material in violation of any laws including copyright
- Private, personal information published without consent
- Commercial promotions and spam

- 6.2 Comments are monitored and responded to; and if necessary removed.
- 6.3 Information that is published should be fair, factual, thorough and transparent.

7. WhatsApp

- 7.1 The Council group is for urgent communications to expedite progress of Council matters. Unless delegated authority has been resolved to certain members, no decisions can be made via WhatsApp.
- 7.2 Personal communications should not take place within this group. Conversation in WhatsApp, like all councillor emails; are subject to Freedom of Information legislation.

8 Personal/System Security

- 8.1 User accounts and passwords are strictly for the use of the registered user and should not be shared or made accessible to others. It is not acceptable to use anyone else's username and passwords.
- 8.2 Do not give out personal details to anyone via email.
- 8.3 It is important to respect the privacy of other users as well as be polite and appreciate that others may have different views to your own. Any use of strong language, swearing or aggressive behaviour is not permitted.

9. Status of Policy

Adopted 20th April 2016
Reviewed 15th May 2019
Reviewed 24th September 2025
Reviewed and amended 26th August 2026

Review period: 4 yearly