



Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables the Council to interact in a way that improves 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 and a 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. This Policy will be kept under regular review to reflect any new arrangements.

The Council Facebook page intends to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our communities and promote our community positively.

Social Media 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, which is subject to copyright, for which we do not own the copyright, or if permission has not been given;
- Not contain personal information unless there are legitimate grounds or consent to do so;
- If it is official Council business it will be moderated by either the Clerk or the Deputy 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, 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 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 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 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 council's Clerk and/or members of the council by emailing.

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 Council's policy or the law.

The Council's response to any communication received not meeting the above criteria will be to either ignore it, inform the sender of our policy or send a brief response as appropriate. This will be at the Council's discretion based on the message received, given our 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 and Electronic Communications 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 able to submit a formal complaint to the Council or report the matter to the Police as soon as possible to allow due process.

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 Councillors for consideration and response. We may not respond to every comment we receive, particularly if we 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.

Council email

The Clerk to the Council has their own council email address: clerk.alcc@gmail.com

The email account is monitored during office hours, Monday to Friday 9am to 1pm. We aim to reply to all queries as soon as we can. An 'out of office' message will be used as appropriate.

The Clerk and Deputy Clerk are 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 or Deputy Clerk, and/or otherwise will always be copied to the Council's email address. New emails which require data to be passed on will be followed up where necessary with a data consent form for completion before action is taken with that correspondence.

Individual councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with constituents in relation to their own personal views. They may use their own personal email or social media accounts to do so. They may copy correspondence to the Clerk. Any emails copied to the Clerk become official Council communications and will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act. Any emails that are sent or received by councillors are 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)

Members and the 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, this policy also applies.

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 required to abide by the Code of Conduct and the General Data Protection regulation (formerly 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 be aware of the confidentiality of

information 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 prescribed procedures. It may result in a member being reported to the Public Services Ombudsman. It may also lead to criminal proceedings.

Members should also be careful only to copy essential recipients in to emails. Think about whether you need to, and if possible avoid using the 'Reply to All' option, but of course copy in all who need to know and ensure irrelevant email trails (earlier emails on the same subject which are no longer relevant) are removed.

Adopted by the Council: 21 November 2018