

Adopted November 2023

Newdigate Parish Council realise that social media and networking websites have become a regular part of everyday life and that many people enjoy membership to sites such as Facebook and Twitter. This policy is to provide councillors and staff with guidelines on their responsibilities of use.

The Council Facebook page will be used to share important news and information and within the parish and surrounding areas. This will be supplementary to information published on their website and in the parish magazine. The Parish Council can remind residents of important events and alert followers to news.

Guidelines to be adhered to:

- An official account on any social media website may only be set-up with the consent of the Clerk.
- Only authorised staff may use these accounts to post online and access to the account is strictly limited. Two councillors will also be nominated to monitor the social media account to ensure it is run in accordance with this policy and to manage the account when the clerk is on leave.
- All information published on the internet must comply with the Parish Council's confidentiality policy and data protection.
- Any person who becomes aware of social networking activity that would be deemed distasteful should make the Clerk aware as soon as possible.
- Social media accounts will primarily be used to promote the 'good news' and information, supplementing content already published on the Parish Council website.

Social Media Moderation Policy

The Parish Council Facebook page is reactively moderated. The Council cannot accept responsibility for the content of any comment.

The Council reserves the right to remove comments received on Facebook that:

- Contain abusive, obscene, indecent, or offensive language or link to obscene or offensive material.
- Contain swear words or other sorts of profanity.
- Are completely removed from the topic of conversation or are not relevant to the item posted on the wall.
- Contain abusive language and/or inappropriate comments directed towards an individual involved in the thread, other organisations or the page administrator.

- Constitute spam or promote or advertise products, except where it is for an event, publication or similar item that has direct relevance to the subject of discussion. Information about locating and sharing knowledge is welcomed, but within the specific discussion.
- Are designed to cause nuisance to the page administrator or other users.

FOR SERIOUS AND/OR PERSISTANT BREACHES OF THE MODERATION POLICY WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO PREVENT USERS FROM POSTING ANY FURTHER COMMENTS.

Use of Photos and Video

Only the Parish Clerk or nominated councillor has permission to upload photos or videos. The appropriate permissions must be obtained from all imagery.

Purdah

In the six-week run up to an election – local, general or European councils have to be very careful not to do or say anything that could be viewed in any way to support any political party or candidate. The period is known as purdah. The council will continue to publish important service announcements using social media but will monitor and potentially have to remove responses if they are overtly party political.

Communications

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.

The Parish Council reserve the right to take any necessary steps to protect members of the Parish Community and will delete any comments referencing the Parish Council which are deemed abusive or offensive in anyway.

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).