MIDDLETON STONEY PARISH COUNCIL

Social Media Policy

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables Middleton Parish Council to interact in a way that improves the 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 (https://www.shiptononcherwellthrupp-pc.org.uk/) 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. When these changes occur, this Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

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 Council business, it will be moderated by either the Clerk to the Council or nominated Parish Councillor(s);
- not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

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 abuse of 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.

The site is not monitored 24 hours a day 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.

Reviewed Date: May 2028

Please make direct contact with the Council's Clerk (clerk@shiptononcherwellthrupp-pc.org.uk) and/or members of the council by sending an email or letter.

We retain the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- obscene or racist content;
- personal attacks, insults, or threatening language;
- potentially libellous or defamatory 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;
- allegations of 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, 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 social media not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. Repeat offenders will be blocked. The 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 Council's 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 Councillors for consideration and response. We may not respond to every comment we receive particularly if we are experiencing a heavy workload.

Parish Council email
The Clerk to the Parish Council has a specific council email address – clerk@shiptononcherwellthrupp-pc.org.uk. 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 is 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 Council will usually come from the Clerk, and/or otherwise will always be copied to the Clerk.

Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views, if appropriate, copy to the Clerk. Any emails sent to the Clerk or Councillors in their official capacity will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act 2018.

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.

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 communication is a major factor in delivering improvement.

Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act in all their work on behalf of the Council.

As more and more information become 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).

Members should also be careful only to cc essential recipients on emails i.e. to avoid use of the 'Reply to All' option, if at all possible, but of course copying in all who need to know and ensuring that email trails have been removed.