



# BRIZE NORTON PARISH COUNCIL

## Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

<b>Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy</b>	
Adopted by Full Council	<b>June 2019</b>
Last Review	<b>June 2022</b>
This Review	<b>July 2024</b>
Next Review	<b>July 2026</b>

### **PURPOSE & SCOPE**

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables Brize Norton 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 ([www.brizenortonparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.brizenortonparishcouncil.co.uk)), Brize Norton Facebook and X page which the Website Administrator manages (the latter is linked to the home page on the website), and uses e-mail 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.

### **ONLINE CODE OF CONDUCT**

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 they 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.

## **PARISH COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA**

The Facebook and X pages are available to provide information and updates regarding activities (sharing links from other parish groups) and opportunities within the Parish and promotes our community positively.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives,

- 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;
- refrain from using the Council's Facebook page for commercial purposes or to advertise market or sell products.
- avoid personal/private information in social media posts.

Sending a message or posting via Facebook or X 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, direct contact with the Council's Clerk ([clerk@brizenortonparishcouncil.co.uk](mailto:clerk@brizenortonparishcouncil.co.uk)) and/or members of the council by sending an email or letter.

Brize Norton Parish Council 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 is a public body run by volunteers. E-mails or other communications that are rude and abusive will not be tolerated.

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. The Clerk or Councillors will aim to respond to every comment received, within reason.

Information from other groups within the community may request information to be posted on the website by the Clerk or Website Administrator. This will be approved at the Council's discretion.

## **PARISH COUNCIL E-MAIL**

Parish Councillors each have their own council e-mail address –([@brizenortonparishcouncil.co.uk](mailto:@brizenortonparishcouncil.co.uk)) and are strongly advised to use this for parish correspondence. As the Clerk is part-time, the official e-mail account ([clerk@brizenortonparishcouncil.co.uk](mailto:clerk@brizenortonparishcouncil.co.uk)) is monitored outside office hours, and aims to reply to all questions sent as soon as convenient. An 'out of office' message is used when appropriate.

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with e-mail 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 may use their personal e-mail address to communicate with parishioners in relation to their own personal views. All Parish Council correspondence should utilize the Council e-mail and if appropriate, copy in the Clerk. Any e-mails 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.

Councillors are advised not to forward personal information on to other people or groups outside of the Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers, as this would be a breach of Data Protection Regulations. Councillors should avoid long e-mail chains and are advised to use a new e-mail for each subject They should avoid 'Reply to All' where possible and only copy in essential recipients.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION**

The Council is continually looking at ways to improve its outreach to the community 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.

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 considered 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).