

# Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

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Originator: Jayne Simpson	Agreed: RTC Annual Meeting 16 <sup>th</sup> May 2023

## BACKGROUND

### **POLICY**

Ripley Town Council has adopted this Training and Development Policy to provide a sound structure to the way it conducts its business

### Ripley Town Council Training and Development Policy

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables Ripley Town Council (the 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, a Facebook page, twitter account 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.

### **Use of Social Media (To be published on Facebook, Twitter, other Sites and the website)**

The Ripley Town Council Social Media pages intend to:

Provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within The Ripley Township and outlying Villages and promote helpful thoughts and comments from residents within the wards.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Ripley Town Council page are productive, respectful, energized and consistent within the Council's policy, it asks everyone commenting or using the pages to follow these guidelines:

Be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarity, threats, prejudice or illegal posts will not be tolerated.

Differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone will not be permitted.

Share freely and be generous but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.

Refrain from using Social Media pages for commercial purposes or to market products.

The sites are not monitored continuously, and the Council will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, it will endeavour to pass appropriate suggestions and concerns to the relevant people.

Sending a message or post via Social Media will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes, and the Council will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through this channel. Instead, users are requested to use the contact details on the website — [townclerk@ripleytowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@ripleytowncouncil.gov.uk)

Users are requested not to include personal or private information in their social media posts and messages.

The Council retains the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- Obscene or racist content
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language
- Potentially libelous statements
- Plagiarized material; any material in violation of any laws, including copyright
- Private, personal information published without consent
- Information or links unrelated to the area the Council serves
- Commercial promotions or spam

Non-compliance will not be tolerated and can result in a ban.

Ripley Town Council is not responsible for the accuracy of content posted by any subscriber; opinions expressed in comments on the Council's social media pages do not necessarily represent those of the Council.

All comments, once posted, become the property of the Council and it reserves the right to reproduce, distribute, publish, display or edit them. Derivative work can also be created from such postings or content, and used for any purpose, in any form and on any other media.

The Council is not responsible or liable for, and does not endorse the privacy practices, of any social media or any linked websites. Users of social media and any linked websites do so at their own risk.

The Council assumes no responsibility or liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred as a result of any use of or reliance upon the information and material contained within or downloaded from these websites.

Although the Council takes users privacy seriously, it cannot guarantee any privacy on this site. Messages and authors may be recorded and available to the public through

the Freedom of Information Act. The Council will co- operate with relevant authorities where there is a reasonable or authorised request.

Social media sites may occasionally be unavailable, and we accept no responsibility for this lack of service.

The presence of any advertisement on Social media pages is not an endorsement of the authenticity or quality of the goods, services or website and the Council will not be held responsible for any claims arising in that respect.

The Council discourages posts or comments on issues of a political nature and will not engage with them.

Councillors comments should not advertise commercial products or services.

By choosing to comment on or use any the Council social media site, users are deemed to agree to this policy.

The Council will not tolerate the use of Social Networking sites by staff or members for unofficial or inappropriate purposes including ;

- messages produced by employees or Members, either during or outside of normal working hours that could constitute bullying, harassment or other detriment to colleagues, the Council or anyone associated with the Council.
- Personal use of Social Media during working hours
- On Line Gambling
- Accessing or transmitting pornography
- Posting confidential information about other Employees or anyone associated with the Council.
- Posting comments, opinions, views or remarks, either during or outside of normal working hours, which could be considered detrimental to the Council, its Employees or associated individuals.

Please note that breaching these procedures will constitute an act of Gross Misconduct. Consequently, anyone accused of breaching these procedures will be subjected to a Formal Disciplinary Investigation and may be dismissed if found guilty.

## **Email**

The Town Clerk, Deputy Clerk, other Staff and every Councillor have their own Council email addresses which must be used for any communications regarding the town Council, no other email addresses will be acceptable. The email accounts are monitored, Monday to Friday, and the Council aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as practicable.

The Town Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and passing any on to the relevant Member or external agency to action.

## **All communications on behalf of the Council must come from the Town Clerk.**

Individual Councillors are not at liberty to communicate directly with the Community using their ripleytowncouncil.gov.uk email they should communicate through the Town Clerk.

In relation to Councillors own personal views these should not be communicated using the ripleytowncouncil.gov.uk email, if appropriate and wishing to communicate with the Community using personal emails, copy to the Clerk.

NB: any emails copied to the Clerk become official and will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act.

The Council reserves the right to access and electronic tablet or all areas of any computer and software systems which it owns.

These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

### **SMS (texting)**

Members, the Town Clerk and the Deputy 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. Zoom, Skype**

If this medium is used to communicate please note that this policy also applies to the use of video conferencing.

### **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. The Councillors are expected to abide by the "use of social media" section (see above) 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 maintain an awareness of the confidentiality of all information that they have access to and not to share that information with anyone unless they are sure that it is reasonable to do so.

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 All option if at all possible.