

WESTERLEIGH & COALPIT HEATH PARISH COUNCIL – SOCIAL MEDIA & WEBSITE POLICY

1. Introduction and scope of the policy

The use of digital and social media enables Westerleigh & Coalpit Heath Parish Council to interact in a way that improves communication between the council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

The council has a website and Facebook page. This policy applies to the council's website and Facebook page and councillors' use of social media.

Use of council email accounts is covered by the council's **IT and Email Policy**.

The council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time the council may add to its channels of communication as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur, this policy will be updated.

2. The Council website

The council website provides official information about the council and its activities to meet legal requirements and information relevant to the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves. It is moderated by the Parish Clerk.

The following items are included on the website:

- meeting dates,
- meeting agendas and minutes,
- financial information as required under the Transparency Code and the Practitioners' Guide;
- policies and procedures,
- councillor information,
- information about our services and facilities
- information about planning applications in the parish,
- links to the relevant external websites e.g. South Gloucestershire Council,
- information about community buildings (managed by community groups) and contact details,
- relevant news articles.

The following items will NOT be included:

- articles affiliated to, or promoting any political organisation,
- commercial advertisements.

3. The Council Facebook Page

The council Facebook page intends to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our parish and promote our community positively. It is moderated by the Parish Clerk, and the Chair and Vice Chair of the council. *If the Parish Clerk, Chair or Vice Chair vacate their positions, their access to the Facebook page will be immediately terminated.*

Communications on the council's Facebook page 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 we do not have permission to share,
- not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details,

- not be used for the dissemination of any political or commercial advertising.

The Facebook page is not monitored 24/7 and the council will not always be able to reply individually to messages or comments received. Please do not include personal/private information in your social media posts to the council.

Sending a message/post via the Facebook page will not be considered as contacting the council for official purposes and the Parish Clerk/ councillors will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through these channels. All official contact should be to the Clerk via email or phone:

Clerk@westerleighcoalpitheathparishcouncil.gov.uk

07367 787883

4. Guidelines for community use of the Facebook page

In order to ensure that all discussions on the council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the council's aims and objectives, the council reserves the right to remove comments or content that include:

- obscene or racist content,
- personal attacks (including upon councillors and staff), 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,
- affiliation to, or promotion of any political organisation,
- alleged breaches of the council's policy or the law.

Any information posted on the Facebook page meeting 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 Policy has been removed'.

5. Councillors' use of social media

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

Councillors who post the council's Facebook Page must observe the Code of Conduct. A councillor posting on any social media platform, referring to themselves as a councillor – even if it is in a personal capacity – may be considered as acting in an official capacity and should abide by the Code of Conduct. Councillors are personally responsible for the social media content they create, publish and share.

6. Policy review

This policy was first adopted in June 2025 and replaces the Communications Policy.

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its relevance and effectiveness or when the council changes or adds to its channels of communication.