NORTH FERRIBY PARISH COUNCIL

Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy

1. General

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables North Ferriby Parish Council to interact in a way that improves the communications between the Parish Council and the local residents of North Ferriby.

The Parish Council has a website www.northferribyparishcouncil.co.uk , a Facebook page, and uses email to communicate internally and externally. The Parish Clerk is responsible for the maintenance and content of the website and Facebook page.

The Parish 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.

2. Social Media & Website

The Parish Council's Facebook page intends to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within the Parish and promote our community **positively**.

Communications from the Parish 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;
- be moderated by either the Clerk to the Council or nominated Councillors;
- not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Parish Council's social media page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Parish Council's aims and objectives, we ask Members of the Public to follow these guidelines:

- be considerate and respectful of others - vulgarity, threats, potentially libellous or defamatory statements 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 Parish Council posts, but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due;
- stay on topic.
- refrain from using the Parish Council's Facebook page for commercial purposes or to advertise market or sell products.

The site is not monitored 24/7 and we will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received.

Sending a message, posting, or commenting on social media will not be considered as contacting the Parish 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 Parish Council via the Clerk on clerk@northferribyparishcouncil.gov.uk .

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

- obscene or racist content;
- personal attacks, 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;
- allegations of a breach of a Parish Council's policy or the law.

The Parish Council's response to any communication received not meeting the above criteria either on social media or via email 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 communication received. Any information posted on the Facebook page not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible and repeat offenders will be blocked. If the post alleges a breach of a Parish Council's policy or the law the person who posted it will be asked to submit a formal complaint to the Parish Council or report the matter to the Police as soon as possible to allow due process.

Where necessary, we may direct those contacting us to our website to see the required information.

The Council may, at its discretion, allow and enable approved local groups to have and maintain a presence on its website for the purpose of presenting information about the group's activities. The local group would be responsible for sending the required content to the Clerk and ensuring that it meets the Council's 'rules and expectation' for the web site. The Clerk will endeavour to update the information as soon as possible but this could take up to a 7 days, during busy times. The Council reserves the right to remove any or all of a local group's information from the web site if it feels the action is necessary.

3. Parish Council Email

The Clerk to the Parish Council has a specific council email address clerk@northferribyparishcouncil.gov.uk . The email account is monitored only during office hours, Monday to Friday, and we aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as we can. The Parish Clerk is solely 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 Parish Council will come from the Parish Clerk.

All Councillors will be given a Parish Council email address which should be used exclusively for all Parish Council business. The Clerk is responsible for creating the account and it will be

deleted once the seat is vacated. Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views, and 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.

Members must not forward personal information on to other people or groups outside of the Parish Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers. Care should also be taken only to cc essential recipients on emails i.e. to avoid use of the 'Reply to All' option, if at all possible, but only copying in those who need to know, ensuring that email trails have been removed.

4. Guidance for Councillors

Councillors need be aware that the use of social media in both a personal and business capacity can present risks to the Parish Council's confidential information & reputation and can jeopardise the Parish Council's compliance with legal obligations.

Councillors also need to be aware that the information they post on their personal social media profiles can make them identifiable to service users, as well as people they know in a private capacity. They must make it clear that it is their own personal view, and they are not acting as a Councillor, or on behalf of the Parish Council. They must also not:

- use the Cllr or Councillor title on Social Media,
- present personal opinions as that of the Parish Council,
- post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the Parish Council,
- bring the Parish Council into disrepute,
- conduct any online activity that violates laws and regulations, or that constitutes a criminal offence,
- post any views in advance of a decision to be debated by the Parish Council or at a Committee Meeting as that may constitute predetermination or bias and be in breach of the Localism Act 2011 - section 25.

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).

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