

Fawkham Parish Council

Social Media and Communications Policy

1. Introduction

This policy has been drafted to govern the use of social media and other external communications methods that Fawkham Parish Council engages in.

The principles of this policy will apply to both Parish Councillors and the Clerk.

2. Social Media

- Fawkham Parish Council will have a dedicated Facebook page. This will be used to publish official messages from the Parish Council.
- The Facebook page administrators will be the Parish Clerk and the Chair.
- Posts will be approved by the Parish Council as a corporate body before they are published.
- Individual Parish Councillors will not publish official messages of the Council from their personal accounts as this may create confusion amongst residents.
- The Facebook page will become a member of the Fawkham Community Facebook Group and will share all its posts to the group. This means people do not need to “follow” the page to see posts from FPC. All posts to the Facebook page will also be posted to FPC’s website as “News” items, and visa versa.
- Any comments made by the Clerk or Parish Councillors on the FPC Facebook page or Fawkham Community Facebook Group regarding Fawkham Parish Council matters must reflect an agreed position/view of the Council and not represent personal opinion.

3. Press Releases

- Any requests for press releases must be submitted by the Clerk, who will seek the Parish Council’s agreement as a corporate body to any press release.
- Proactive media releases may be issued to promote a decision or work of the Parish Council. Reactive press releases will be prepared and issued in response to a specific question or as a rebuttal to an article already published. Such statements should be dealt with in a timely manner.
- The media may on occasions attempt to by-pass the Clerk; however, it is essential that all press communications are coordinated and managed through the Clerk. Where Parish Councillors are contacted direct by the media, they should refer them to the Clerk.
- The Parish Council occasionally works with partners, mostly from the public sector, and in these circumstances, their contribution should be acknowledged.
- Press reports from the Parish Council shall, in general, be sent from the Clerk

4. Correspondence with the Council

- The first point of contact for the Parish Council is the Clerk and it is to the Clerk that all correspondence for the Parish Council should be addressed.

- In general, the Clerk sends out the Council's correspondence to other bodies, although there may be situations when it is appropriate for a Parish Councillor to issue correspondence in his/her own name, for example, regarding an agreed issue they are leading on, with any such correspondence copied to the Clerk.
- Such correspondence must relate to matters authorised by the Parish Council and the correspondence must make it clear at the end of the email that it has been written in an official capacity.
- Correspondence sent on behalf of the Parish Council to Sevenoaks District Council shall be copied to the three District Councillors, and that sent to Kent County Council shall be copied to the County Member.
- No individual Parish Councillor should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the Parish Council. In particular, Parish Councillors do not have a right to obtain confidential information/documentation unless they can demonstrate a "need to know."

5. **Code of Conduct Implications**

Fawkham Parish Council has adopted a Code of Conduct and if using social media where it could be perceived that you are acting in an official capacity, (i.e. you are commenting on PC matters) any author should be mindful of the seven Nolan principles of the Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

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