



Malton Town Council Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

Scope

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables the Town Council to interact in a way that improves the communications between the Council and the parishioners, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

The Council has a website and Facebook page and uses email to communicate. The Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. The Council Facebook page intends to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our town and promote our community positively.

The scope of this policy includes comments and posts to pages beyond those owned by the council, i.e. 3rd party pages.

Criteria

Councillors and Staff are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in all their work on behalf of the Council.

Communications from the Councillors and Staff will meet the following criteria:

- Be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libelous, 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, named individuals constitute a data breach under the GDPR.
- If it is official Council business it will be moderated by either Mayor or the Clerk to the Council;
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.
- 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.

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

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.

Right of Removal

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

- Obscene or racist content.
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language.
- Potentially libelous 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.
- Alleges a breach of a Council's policy or the law.

The Council's response to any communication received not meeting the above criteria will be to either to simply remove, 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. Any information posted on the Facebook page not in line with 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'. 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.

Email

The council has its own email addresses clerk@malton-tc.gov.uk and deputy.clerk@malton-tc.gov.uk

The Council email accounts are monitored mainly during office hours and staff will aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as possible. The Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and passing on any relevant mail to members or external agencies for information or action. All communications on behalf of the Council will usually come from the Clerk.

Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views, if appropriate, copy to the Clerk. These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

Under the General Data Protection Regulation passing off is not permitted - any email forwarded by the office, should then not be passed off or forwarded to a third party. It has to stay within the circle of the 'data controller' the council as a whole. If you would like to forward the content of the email to a third party, and you consider it safe to do so, please rewrite the email ensuring that there are no named data subjects and no data subject email addresses showing. Members should also be careful to avoid use of the 'Reply to All' option so that passing off does not take place.

Adopted by Malton Town Council - May 2018, Last Review May 2023. Next Review May 2026