



Communications and Social Media Policy

This policy provides guidance and reassurance and how Birdlip Parish Council retains authority and control over its means of communication. In addition, the policy provides guidance to Parish Councillors and its Officers in the use of online communications, collectively referred to as social media, a term used to describe methods of publishing and communicating via the internet.

The policy covers all communication via the Parish Council website, emails, social media sites, communications with the press and written media. The website will remain the main source of information about the Parish Council and its activities, 'networking' platforms will largely be used to speedily enhance/direct users to the website or other sources of information.

Anyone managing any of the Parish Council's social media or website will be expected to have installed, on their devices, a robust, regularly updated, industry standard virus checker and firewall.

Management of media platforms used by the Parish Council

Whilst the Clerk will remain the key contact and administrator for media activity, particularly in terms of the website management, support will be provided by nominated councillor who will lead on communications issues.

The principles of this policy apply to Parish Councillors and Clerks and is also intended for general guidance for others who are communicating with the Parish Council.

Birdlip Parish Council Website

The website, **Birdlippc.org.uk** will be used to:

- Post minutes and agendas, dates of meetings
- Provide contact details for the Parish Council (Clerk and Cllrs)
- Advertise projects, events and activities being carried out by the Parish Council
- Publish positive stories about parish activity
- Link to relevant planning applications (on the Cotswold District Council (CDC) planning portal) impacting on the Parish and notice of Parish and CDC decisions regarding these applications
- Advertise councillor and staff vacancies
- Announcing new information
- Post or share information, at the discretion of the Parish Council, from CDC and parish related community groups, clubs, associations, bodies e.g., Schools, Groups, etc.
- In the event of a declared emergency impacting on the parish relevant information from the emergency services, CDC and the Parish Council
- Provide a contact channel to the Clerk for residents and others

Facebook

Recognising the popularity of Facebook in the parish, this platform will be used to support the website information above and provide a more informal platform for the Parish Council to provide information and updates regarding activities within Birdlip and promote positive thoughts and comments from residents.

Communications from the Parish Council will meet the following criteria: –

- Will be civil, tasteful and relevant.
- Will not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive.
- Will not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which the Parish Council does not own the copyright.
- Will not contain any personal information
- If it is official Council business, it will be moderated by the Parish Council Clerk (the Moderator)
- Will not to be used for the dissemination of any political advertising or communication.
- Will not to be used for any commercial advertising or promotion.
- Once new content is posted on Facebook the ‘discussion’ button will be disabled.
- The Parish Council social media sites and emails are not monitored 24/7 and the Parish Council will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received.

General guidance for councillors when using social media

Whilst it is mainly the Parish Clerk who is responsible for input onto social media platforms, Councillors are expected to ensure the following principles are observed as matters of good practice and to take responsibility as ‘moderators’ for all final published content.

Any social media content (even informal) needs to be clearly attributed to the Parish Council and content should not be presented in a way that might cause embarrassment or bring the Parish Council into disrepute.

Any Councillor proposing to speak to the press or write an article for publication in the press or social media, the subject of which is not already in the public domain, should first obtain the permission of the Chair, in the absence of the Chair the Vice Chair or the Clerk.

All content posted on any social media site must not be an expression of individual opinion (that of individual Councillors or the Clerks) and must not bring the Parish Council into disrepute or is contrary to the Council’s Code of Conduct or any other Policies.

Councillors must use their discretion and common sense when engaging on their own personal social media sites. Councillors should also be aware that if information is shared onto subsequent sites, then the comments button will be enabled, any content that is posted on their own site may not be private and may be distributed beyond the intended recipients. Councillors are therefore strongly advised not to engage in ‘conversations’ on any social media sites where the subject concerns Parish Council business or Policy.

With regard to Facebook, even though style may be less formal than the website, the tone of comments must remain respectful, informative and not contain remarks that could be perceived as being inflammatory.

Use of Photographs

Permission to publish photographs or videos on the website or Facebook should be sought from the subjects before being uploaded or distributed. Checks should be made regarding copyright.

Legal Considerations

The Councillors and Officers must avoid any content which may violate laws or regulations, in particular relating to data protection laws – for instance as a general rule, an individual's name or personal details should not be published on Parish Council social media unless written permission is provided.

Any negative posts placed on the Parish Council social media platforms which may contain personal and inflammatory racist, sexist or homophobic remarks or defamatory information will be removed by the Parish Clerks and/or Lead Councillor without further comment or notification. In addition, the Parish Council will remove all comments or content that includes: obscene content, personal attacks, insults, or threatening language potentially libellous statements, plagiarized material; any material in violation of any laws, including copyright, private, personal information published without consent, information or links unrelated to the Parish Council / Birdlip.

Parish Councillors are actively encouraged to promote the activities of the Parish Council in a positive manner.

The Parish Council reserve the right to report any user, who is thought to have broken any law, to the appropriate authority.

Councillors or residents who have any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should report them in the first instance to the Clerk of the Council via the Parish Council email address clerk@Birdlipcc.org.uk. or by telephone 07941258052.

General principles of communication and legal waivers

Sending a message/posting on social media will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and we will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through social media. Instead, please contact the Clerk on clerk@Birdlipcc.org.uk.

The Parish Council will never publish your personal details or pass them onto a third party without your express permission and you should not include personal/private information in your social media posts/messages to us. The Parish Council will not take responsibility for any consequences resulting from a person or persons publishing personal details on their social media platforms but will make every effort to remove them where requested.

The Parish Council is not responsible nor liable for and does not endorse the privacy practices of any social media site and any linked websites. The use of social media sites and any linked websites is at your own risk.

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

The Parish Council website may be occasionally taken off the internet for maintenance purposes – every effort will be made to communicate this fact to the public. The Parish Council also accepts no responsibility for the lack of service if social media sites are occasionally unavailable.

The Parish Council is strictly non-political, and will not engage in or with, and will remove any posts or comments on issues of a political nature.

By choosing to comment and/or utilise any of the Parish Council's platforms or posts, users are deemed to agree to this policy.

Council Meetings

Council Meetings are monthly (except for July and December) on the third Wednesday of the month (unless a decision is taken to amend this at the previous meeting). Parish Meetings take place in St Mary's Church, usually starting at 7.pm unless advertised with an alternative time on the agenda. Council agendas and minutes are published on the website and on at least one village noticeboard.

The chairman, will invite any members of the public attending meetings to speak during the public session on the agenda. The public session is strictly limited to 15 minutes (3 minutes per person) unless an extension is requested and agreed by the chair, preferably in advance of the meeting date. All questions will be asked through the chair.

Parish Council sub committees are working groups and not decision making events therefore these meetings are not open to the public and are by invitation only.

Noticeboards

The purpose of this part of the policy is to provide guidelines for the usage of the Parish Council noticeboards and the materials which can be displayed.

The aim of the Parish Council noticeboards is primarily to display Statutory Information and communicate Parish Council activity.

It is a legal requirement to publish the summons (notice of meeting and agenda) 3 clear days before a meeting in a conspicuous place in the Parish. Birdlip Parish Council will post this on the designated noticeboard situated on the Bus Shelter. (It will also publish this on the Birdlip PC Website). A copy of the draft minutes will be posted on the noticeboard when they are available.

The noticeboards will also provide:

- Contact details of the Parish Clerk
- Details of the Parish Website
- Council and staff vacancies
- Election results

The parish council may also post practical local information e.g. road closure notices from Highways and waste collection service information from CDC and notices from other agencies e.g., voluntary groups, NHS, Fire and Rescue Authority, the Police etc. offering services or information that may be of use to specific groups of residents, particularly those that promote health and social well-being, or offer educational or cultural opportunities.

The following will not be displayed on the noticeboards

- Commercial advertisements.
- Publicity for any fundraising event or organisation that is not a charity.
- Political notices

Notices should be a maximum of A4 and include the name and contact details of the author. Notices should be factually correct and must not be critical of or offensive to any person or organisation.

The Noticeboard will be maintained by the Clerk.

The Parish Council reserves the right to decline to display any notice.

Press and Media

Any contact with the local media will initially be via the clerk to the parish council. The chair or Vice Chair will be the **only** councillors who will if required, provide an interview with the local/national media. Any press release will be drawn up by the clerk and agreed with the chair and Vice Chair.

Policy Adopted 18th February 2026

Next Review Date February 2027