

Keynsham Town Council Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

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

Keynsham Town Council has a website, Facebook page, Instagram and uses email to communicate. The 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.

The Council social media accounts intends to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our Parish/Town and promote our community positively.

Communications from the 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.
- If it is official Council business, it will be moderated by the Town Clerk to the Council;
- Social Media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Council pages are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives, we ask you to follow these guidelines:

- 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 social media sites 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. However, we will endeavour to ensure that any emerging themes or

helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people or authorities. Please do not include personal/private information in your social media posts to us.

Sending a message/post via 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 these channels. Instead, please make direct contact with the Town Clerk and/or members of the Council by emailing.

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
- 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 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 message received, given our limited resources available. Any information posted on the Facebook page not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. 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.

Town Council Website.

Where necessary, we may direct those contacting us to our website to see the required information, or we may forward their question to one of our Councillors for consideration and response. We may not respond to every comment we receive particularly if we are experiencing a heavy workload.

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 maintaining the content and ensuring that it meets the Council's 'rules and expectation' for the website. The Council reserves the right to remove any or all of a local group's information from the web site if it feels that the content does not meet the Council's 'rules and expectation' for its website. Where content on the website is maintained by a local group it should be clearly marked that such content is not the direct responsibility of the Council.

Town Council email

The main address for members of the public to contact the Town Council is via the Town Clerk (townclerk@keysham-tc.gov.uk) This email account is monitored mainly during office hours, Monday to Friday, and we aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as we can. An 'out of office' message will be used when appropriate.

The Town Clerk is 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 Council will usually come from the Town Clerk, and/or otherwise will always be copied to the Town Clerk. All new Emails requiring data to be passed on, will be followed up with a Data consent form for completion before action is taken with that correspondence.

All members of staff and Councillors will also have their own individual Town Council email addresses which they are expected to use for all Council communications. Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners but should copy in the Town Clerk. Emails sent from Town Council emails addresses are official and will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act.

These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept. Do not forward personal information on to other people or groups outside of the Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers. Any emails required to be sent to groups of individuals will either use the B.C.C. function or a suitable email distribution service such as MailChimp.

Do not use any other messaging service ie WhatsApp for Council Business. If the Councillors do have any WhatsApp groups the Clerk must be included as a member.

WhatsApp and Messenger

Councillors can reply to residents who contact them through WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger as there's no rule saying councillor correspondence has to be by email.

Communicating in their role as a councillor, the same basic rules still apply for WhatsApp and messenger. For straightforward exchanges – answering a question, acknowledging a concern or signposting someone to the Clerk – replying WhatsApp or messenger is acceptable. For anything more substantive, particularly complaints, sensitive personal information, requests for Council action or anything that may need to form part of the Council's records, the conversation will need to be moved to the Councils normal email system and involving the Clerk where appropriate.

Councillors are also reminded that using a personal WhatsApp or Messenger account doesn't necessarily take the correspondence outside FOI/EIR or data protection requirements if it relates to Council business.

SMS (texting)

Members and the Town Clerk may use SMS as a convenient way to communicate at times. All are reminded that this policy also applies to such messages.

Video Conferencing e.g. Skype

If this medium is used to communicate please note that this policy also applies to the use of video conferencing.

Internal communication and access to information within the Town Council

Keynsham Town Council is continually looking at ways to improve its working and the use of Social Media and electronic communications is a major factor in delivering improvement. Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct, Members and Officers Protocol, Press Policy and the General Data Protection Regulations (2008) in all their work on behalf of the Town Council

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 personal data 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).

Members should also be careful only to cc essential recipients on emails i.e. to avoid use of the 'Reply to All' option if at all possible, but of course copying in all who need to know and ensuring that email trails have been removed.

Councillor and Officers on Social Media

When Councillors and Officers providing written material to Social Media they must make it clear in what capacity they are providing information. For example:

- As Chair of the Town Council
- As Chair of a committee or working party
- As an individual
- As a spokesperson or press officer for a political party
- As group leader

A copy of any written material provided by a Councillor or officers, representing the Council, for Social Media shall be forwarded to the Town Clerk for approval.

Councillors may issue their own Social Media posts on their personal social media pages, but it must be obvious to the recipient that these are personal and are not written on behalf of the Town Council. This release may or may not be political and should not include the name of a Council Officer, or a Council telephone number as a point of contact. Member posts must not use the Town Councils logo.

Signed (Chair of Town Council):



Date: 150926



Signed (Town Clerk):

Date: 15th September 2026

