WESTON ON THE GREEN PARISH COUNCIL
SOCIAL MEDIA & ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

The use of digital, social media and electronic communication enables Weston on the Green Parish 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.

The Council:
- has a website www.westononthegreen-pc.gov.uk
- has administration and editorial access to the Weston on the Green Parish Council Facebook Page and when required reposts the page on the Weston on the Green Village Facebook Group
- uses email to communicate between each other and residents. WhatsApp and text messaging is utilised by Councillors.

Facebook
The Parish Council Facebook page is used as a means of providing information to the village, but it is not a medium for direct messaging the Council – the clerk should be contacted directly for any queries. The Clerk is the administrator for the page with Councillors as editors. This page is then either followed or reposted on the Weston on the Green Village Facebook Group to ensure the maximum number of residents see the information.

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 regarding official Council business, any posts by Councillors/Clerk will be moderated by any member of the Council and advice on content provided
- not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

Members of the public are requested to kindly be considerate and respectful of others and to refrain from personal attacks on anyone, including the Council members or staff.
Please do not include personal/private information in response to any Council social media posts.

Sending a message or posting via the Village Facebook Group 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 Council's Clerk (clerk@westononthegreen-pc.gov.uk) and/or members of the council by sending an email or letter.

If required, the Parish Council will contact the administrators of the Weston on the Green Village Facebook Group regarding inappropriate content relating to the Parish Council posts and request for it to be removed.

Parish Council Website
The Parish Council hosts their own website: www.westononthegreen-pc.gov.uk
Content is uploaded by the Clerk, any additions or amendments required should be sent to the Clerk (clerk@westononthegreen-pc.gov.uk) who will be happy to add it to the website when appropriate. Please note the Parish Council's website is not allowed to advertise businesses.
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.

The Council may, at its discretion, allow 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 providing the content to the Clerk who will ensure it is appropriate for the website before uploading it.

Parish Council Email
The Clerk to the Parish Council has their own council email address – clerk@westononthegreen-pc.gov.uk. The 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, please note the clerk is only contracted to work 10 hours per week. An 'out of office' message is used when appropriate.

The 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 Clerk, and/or otherwise will always be copied to the Clerk.

Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views, if appropriate with a 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.

It is advised that all Councillors use a separate email address for Parish Council correspondence to ensure ease of transition when leaving office and if subject to a Freedom of Information request. Councillor specific email addresses are set up via the Council's website provider (Parish Online), alongside specific job emails e.g. chair, planning. It is also advised that the Council 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.

Text Messages and WhatsApp
Councillors and the Clerk may use SMS/WhatsApp as a convenient way to communicate at times. All are reminded that this policy also applies to such messages.

Texts should not be used for:
- day-to-day discussion of, and views on, Council policies and their implementation;
- as evidence of agreement / disagreement;
- an alternative to voting;
- an agreement of a specific course of action or financial commitment by the Council;
- providing feedback to other Councillors;
- proposing agenda items, sharing papers.

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

Policy Adopted by Weston on the Green Parish Council: 7th October 2026 (Minute Reference: 26.441.20)

Review Date: October 2028 (subject to legislation changes or change in Council circumstances)