

SELLING PARISH COUNCIL

CORRESPONDENCE POLICY (PRESS AND MEDIA, SOCIAL MEDIA AND EMAIL)

Adopted: July 2025

Reviewed:

PRESS AND MEDIA

Selling Parish Council's Standing Orders state, "requests from the press or other media for an oral or written comment or statement from the council, its councillors or staff shall be handled in accordance with the council's policy in respect of dealing with the press and/or other media."

This policy outlines the procedures and arrangements for the handling the press and what councillors or the clerk should do if approached by the media or if they are involved in a situation that will attract media attention. Selling Parish Council is keen to develop a good rapport and work proactively with the media, whilst ensuring that confidentiality and consent are maintained at all times.

1. On receipt of a request to the clerk or any councillor from the press or other media for a statement, the person receiving the request will advise the body making the request that a statement will be considered and issued shortly if felt appropriate.
2. On receipt of a request the journalist or other caller should be asked to make clear who they are working for or what is the exact nature of their enquiry. Further they should be asked where any information they elicit will be put.
3. The parish council is under no obligation to provide a statement – and may prefer to make 'no comment'.
4. Only the clerk and/or the Chair will provide the press with a verbal or written statement – ideally this statement would be after liaison with each other as a minimum and may involve input from other councillors also.
5. Under no circumstances must anything of a confidential nature be disclosed to the press or other media.
6. The response to the press or other media should be the view of the parish council as a whole, not the view of an individual councillor or the clerk. However, an individual councillor may give a direct quote as long as they attribute that quote to their name and make it clear that is their view and not that of the parish council.
7. No response should be made that is in any way damaging to the interests or reputation of the parish council.
8. The parish council acknowledges the right of the media to obtain information from the parish council under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA 2000) and the parish council will respond to such requests in accordance with the FOIA 2000.
9. If a request for information involves a conflict of interest for a councillor or the clerk, the councillor or clerk must declare their interest and avoid involvement with the matter.
10. The clerk should keep a record of all communications with the press or other media.
11. The press or representatives from any other media are welcomed at parish council meetings and their presence and conduct is subject to Standing Orders.

SOCIAL MEDIA

This policy outlines the procedures and arrangements for the handling of social media, covering the council website and Facebook page.

Selling Parish Council is keen to utilise social media to interact in a way that improves communication both within the council and externally. The council uses its website and its Facebook page (with corresponding posts on relevant pages) to publish important notices required by legislation, such as agenda and minutes,

as well as other relevant information, as determined by the clerk. The council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications.

1. The clerk is the administrator and moderator of both the website and the council Facebook page. The clerk is responsible for the posting and monitoring of the content, ensuring it complies with the guidelines below.
2. The clerk has authority to remove any posts not complying with the guidelines below.
3. Communications from the council will:
 - a. be civil, tasteful and relevant;
 - b. not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
 - c. not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere without permission;
 - d. not contain any personal information;
 - e. not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.
4. Communications from other users may be removed if they include:
 - a. obscene or racist content;
 - b. personal attacks, insults or threatening language;
 - c. potentially libellous or defamatory statements;
 - d. plagiarised material;
 - e. any material in violation of any laws, including copyright;
 - f. private or personal information published without consent;
 - g. information or links unrelated to the content of the forum;
 - h. commercial promotions or spam;
 - i. allegations of a breach of a council policy or the law.
5. Such content may be removed, ignored or given a brief response if appropriate. Repeat offenders may be blocked.
6. Councillors may be given moderator access if appropriate, particularly if the clerk is unavailable or if the clerk deems it in the best interest of the council.
7. Councillors, and in particular councillors with portfolios, are responsible for providing news and information to the moderator to share information with the community through these channels.
8. Individual councillors are responsible for what they share on social media and personally responsible for any online activity. Councillors should adhere to the Code of Conduct at all times.
9. The channels are not monitored 24 hours a day and not all messages or comments will receive an individual response. However, any emerging themes or helpful suggestions will be passed to the relevant body.
10. Sending a message or posting via Facebook will not be considered as contacting the council for official purposes and the clerk is not obliged to monitor or respond to comments made through these channels.
11. All social media sites in use should be checked and updated on a regular basis and ensure that the security settings are in place.

EMAIL

The council has a main email account clerk@sellingparishcouncil.gov.uk this is monitored during the clerk's working hours. Each councillor also has their own council email address for use on council business.

1. All email correspondence received by the clerk will be dealt with and/or brought to the attention of the council as deemed appropriate, taking into account the council's interests and any ongoing issues.
2. All email correspondence between the clerk and councillors should:
 - a. only use the dedicated parish council email addresses;
 - b. reply only to those who need to see them, try not to 'reply to all' if it is obvious from the originator that they only need a reply;
 - c. never forward information of a confidential nature;
 - d. adhere to the guidelines above for posting on social media.