



## Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

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

The Town Council has a Website, Facebook page, Twitter account and uses email to communicate. The Town Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time the Town 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 Town Council Facebook pages and Twitter account intends to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our Parish and promote our community positively.

Communications from the Town 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, other than necessary basic contact details;
- If official council business it will be moderated by either the Chair/Vice Chair of the Town Council or the Clerk to the Town Council;
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Town Council page 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 Town Council members or staff, will not be permitted.
- Share freely and be generous, 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 or Twitter site 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 Facebook or Twitter 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 Town Clerk and/or members of the council by emailing [enquiries@attleboroughtc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@attleboroughtc.org.uk)

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 Town Council's response to any communications 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. Repeat offenders will be blocked from the Facebook page. The Town 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 Town Councillors for consideration and response. We may not respond to every comment we receive particularly if we are experiencing a heavy workload.

The Town 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 Town Council's 'rules and expectation' for the web site. The Town 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 Town Council's 'rules and expectation' for its web site. Where content on the web site is maintained by a local group it should be clearly marked that such content is not the direct responsibility of the Town Council.

### **Town Council email**

The Town Clerk to the council has their own council email address [enquiries@attleboroughtc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@attleboroughtc.org.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. 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 otherwise will always be copied to the Town Clerk.

Individual councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with Parishioners in relation to their own personal views, if appropriate, copy to the Town Clerk. N.B. any emails copied to the Town Clerk become 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.

### **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 videoconferencing.

### **Images**

To use images of minors under the age of 18 and/or vulnerable adults, written consent must be obtained. Please complete relevant forms on page 4.

### **Internal communication and access to information within the Town Council**

The 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.

### **Town Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct in all their work on behalf of the Town Council:** -

**You must treat others with respect** – do not use social media to make personal attacks or indulge in rude, disrespectful or offensive comments.

**You must comply with equality laws** – do not publish anything that might be seen as racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic or anti-faith.

**You must not bully or harass anyone** – do not say anything, particularly if it is part of a series of similar comments about a person or on a theme that might be constructed as bullying or intimidation.

**You must not bring your office or the Council into disrepute** - you should not publish anything that could reasonably be perceived as reflecting badly upon or lowering the reputation of you or the Council and Officers.

**You must not disclose confidential information** – you must not, in your use of social media, just as in any other circumstance, disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired by you which you believe, or ought

reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature. Inadvertent leaks of the Council's confidential information are more likely to take place when a member is using social media, rather than, say, when they are carefully drafting a letter for publication in the local paper. This may be because of the more immediate conversational, off-the cuff nature of much social media communication. Members must be careful to apply exactly the same standards to their social media communications as they would to statements made in a more formal context.

As more and more information become available at the press of a button, it is vital that all information is treated sensitively and securely. Town 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 Town 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.

Adopted: 1 August 2016

Reviewed at: Attleborough Town Council Meeting 13 May 2019

To be reviewed as and when appropriate.

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01953 456194 [enquires@attleboroughtc.org.uk](mailto:enquires@attleboroughtc.org.uk) [www.attleboroughtc.org.uk](http://www.attleboroughtc.org.uk)

## Consent Form to Use Image of Child/Children

<b>Your name (block capitals)</b>		
<p>I understand that the photograph/recording may be used in print, broadcast or online material by Attleborough Town Council to promote their work or services.</p> <p>I understand that this photograph/recording will <b>NOT</b> be used.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For anything which may be viewed as negative in tone or that may cause offence, embarrassment or distress, e.g. drug/alcohol abuse.</li> <li>In any new footage more than 2 years after the date that the video/image was taken.</li> </ul>		
Having read the statement above, do you give your consent for the photograph/video to be taken and used? (please tick appropriate box)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>YES</b> , I give my consent for the image/video to be taken and used.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>NO</b> , I do not give my consent for the image/video to be taken or used.
<b>Your signature</b>		
<b>Email address and/or tele No.</b>		
<b>Date (date/month/year)</b>		

## Consent Form to Use Image of Anyone Aged 18 years or Over

<b>Your name (block capitals)</b>		
<p>I understand that the photograph/recording may be used in print, broadcast or online material by Attleborough Town Council to promote their work or services.</p> <p>I understand that this photograph/recording will <b>NOT</b> be used.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For anything which may be viewed as negative in tone or that may cause offence, embarrassment or distress, e.g. drug/alcohol abuse.</li> <li>In any new footage more than 2 years after the date that the video/image was taken.</li> </ul>		
Having read the statement above, do you give your consent for the photograph/video to be taken and used? (please tick appropriate box)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>YES</b> , I give my consent for the image/video to be taken and used.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>NO</b> , I do not give my consent for the image/video to be taken or used.
<b>Your signature</b>		
<b>Email address and/or tele No.</b>		
<b>Date (date/month/year)</b>		