BUXHALL PARISH COUNCIL
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Electronic Communication and Social Media Policy for Buxhall Parish Council

Introduction

Buxhall Parish Council (BPC) understands that the use of digital and electronic communication enables it to interact in a manner that improves the communications both within the Parish Council and between the Parish Council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

The Parish Council has a website and uses email to communicate. The Parish Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Should the Parish Council add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers, this policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

Communications from BPC 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 BPC does not own the copyright;
- Not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;
- If official council business, it will be moderated by the Clerk to the Parish Council.

To ensure that all discussions on pages set up by the Parish Council are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives, the guidelines listed below should be followed:

- 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 Parish 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.

Where necessary, BPC may direct those contacting the Council to its website to see the required information, or it may forward the question to the Chair for consideration and a response. The Parish Council may not respond to every comment it receives particularly if it is experiencing a heavy workload.

BPC 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 Parish Council's 'rules and expectation' for the web site. The Parish 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 Parish Council's 'rules and expectation' for its website. 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 Parish Council.

Parish Council email

BPC has its own email address (buxhallpc@live.co.uk). The email account is monitored regularly, and the Parish Council aims to reply to all questions sent as soon as practically possible.

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 otherwise will always be copied to the Clerk.

Please note that the role of Parish Clerk is a part-time post and a response will be made as soon as possible.

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

Internal communication and access to information within the Parish Council

The Parish Council is continually looking at ways to improve its working and the use of electronic communications is a major factor in delivering improvement. Parish Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct in all their work on behalf of the Parish Council. As more information becomes available electronically, it is vital that all information is treated sensitively and securely. Parish 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 Parish 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 be careful only to cc essential recipients on emails and avoid use of the 'Reply to All' option (whilst ensuring that the people who need to know the information are copied in) and ensure that email trails have been removed.

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