

BENTLEY PARISH COUNCIL:

Email Address: Joy Scott [clerk@bentleysuffolkparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@bentleysuffolkparishcouncil.gov.uk)

Reviewed: January 2025

## **Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy**

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables the Parish Council to interact in a way 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 <http://www.bentleysuffolkparishcouncil.gov.uk/>, and uses publication on the website, printed media, occasional posts on the village Facebook page, email and post to communicate information to parishioners. Parishioners wishing to contact the Parish Council formally should do so via email. The Parish Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time the Parish 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 Parish Council website is intended to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our Parish and promote our community positively.

### **Rules of engagement**

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 other than necessary basic contact details;
- If it is official Council business it will be moderated by either the Chair/Vice Chair of the Parish Council or the Clerk to the Parish Council;
- The website will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

Sending a message/post via third party Facebook pages will not be considered as contacting the Parish 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 Parish Council's Clerk by email. Informal contact with individual councillors can of course take place over any communication channel, and councillors may choose to raise matters on behalf of parishioners at the next Parish Council meeting as Correspondence. Matters may then be discussed at subsequent meetings.

The Parish Council reserves the right not to respond to messages and post that are abusive, discriminatory, threatening or personal.

### **Parish Council Website.**

Where necessary, the Clerk may direct those contacting the Parish Council by email and post to our website to see the required information, or she may forward their question to one of our Parish Councillors for consideration and response. The Clerk may not be able to respond to every comment we receive. The Chair or Vice Chair of the P.C. may respond to communications requiring an early response, or nominate an appropriate member of the Council to respond on the Councils behalf. The Parish Council may, at its discretion, direct website users to approved local groups to facilitate contact and inform about the group's activities. The Parish Council reserves the right to remove any or all of a local group's contact information from the website if it feels that the content does not meet the Parish Council's 'rules and expectation' for its website.

### **Parish/Town Council email**

The email account is monitored mainly during office hours, Monday to Friday, and the Clerk aims to reply to all questions sent as soon as she can. The Clerk is responsible for dealing with emails and post 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.

Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views and if appropriate, copy to the Clerk. But must make it very clear that they are not writing on behalf of the Council. NB any emails and post copied to the 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.

**The Clerk to the Council** - can be contacted at: [clerk@bentleysuffolkparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@bentleysuffolkparishcouncil.gov.uk)  
Whites Cottage, Heath Road, East Bergholt, CO7 6RJ.

### **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.

The Clerk shall be responsible for reviewing this policy from time to time to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

**Signed:**  
Chairman: Bentley Parish Council

**Date:** 29<sup>th</sup> August 2020