

Bethersden Parish Council

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Bethersden Parish Council Facebook Page Policy

1. Introduction – Why This Policy Is Needed

Bethersden Parish Council recognises that social media, particularly Facebook, is an effective way to share information quickly and directly with residents. It allows the Council to:

- Keep residents informed about meetings, decisions, and projects.
- Promote local events and community activities.
- Encourage community engagement and transparency.

However, social media also carries risks — including misinformation, misuse, and reputational harm — if not managed carefully. This policy ensures that the Parish Council's Facebook page is used responsibly, consistently, and in line with its legal and ethical duties.

2. Purpose of the Page

The Bethersden Parish Council Facebook page exists to:

- Disseminate official parish council information.
- Share notices of meetings, agendas, minutes, and consultations.
- Promote community events and initiatives that benefit residents.
- Provide updates in emergencies or during significant local incidents.

The page is not a public forum for political debate or personal grievances.

3. Management and Oversight

- The Facebook page will be administered by the Parish Clerk and nominated councillors, as agreed by the full Council.
- Only authorised administrators may post, edit, or moderate content.
- Administrators act on behalf of the Parish Council and must maintain impartiality and professionalism at all times.
- Councillors' or residents' personal pages are not covered by this policy but should respect confidentiality and the Code of Conduct when discussing council matters.

4. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all content published on the Parish Council's official Facebook page, including comments, replies, messages, and shared posts made through that page. It also covers the behaviour of administrators when engaging with the public online.

It does not apply to councillor's personal use of social media, except where such use may bring the Council into disrepute or breach confidentiality.

5. Content Standards

The Parish Council will ensure that:

- Posts are accurate, factual, and neutral in tone.
- Content focuses on council business or community benefit.
- Political material, personal opinions, or commercial advertising will not be posted.

- All information complies with the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act, and other relevant legislation.

6. Moderation and Public Interaction

Residents are encouraged to comment respectfully on posts. However, the Council reserves the right to hide or delete comments that:

- Contain offensive, abusive, or discriminatory language;
- Include personal attacks, harassment, or defamatory statements;
- Promote political views, commercial products, or spam;
- Are unrelated to the original post or repetitive;
- Contain personal information about individuals without consent.

Users who repeatedly breach these rules may be blocked or reported to Facebook where necessary. A note may be left indicating that a comment was removed for policy reasons.

7. Response and Communication

The Facebook page is not monitored continuously. The Clerk will respond to messages or comments where appropriate during normal working hours.

Formal council business (such as official correspondence, planning comments, or complaints) should be sent to the Clerk via email or post, not through Facebook. The page will not be used to engage in debates or lengthy discussions.

8. Record Keeping

Important posts, comments, and messages relevant to council business will be retained in accordance with the Council's records management policy. Deletions or moderation decisions may be logged by the Clerk.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if required by changes in law, technology, or council structure.