

Thornbury Parish Council

Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

Version 1.0

1. Purpose

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables Thornbury Parish Council (“the Council”) to interact in ways that improve the communications both within the Council and between the Council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

The Council has a website (www.thornburyhamlets.com/council/parish-council/), has administrative access to the ‘Thornbury Tatler’ magazine Facebook page (www.facebook.com/ThornburyTatler), and uses email to communicate both internally and externally.

The Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time, the Council may add to the channels that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand its communication methods. When these changes occur, this Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

2. Council website policy

The Council website is administered solely by the Parish Clerk and is used for all statutory purposes, including the publication of public meeting agendas and minutes, accounts and policies. All content is therefore under the direct control of the Council and will be vetted by the Clerk before publication.

3. Facebook policy

The Thornbury Hamlets (‘Tatler’) Facebook page is available to the Council to publish information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within and around the Parish and promote our community positively. Note that all statutory public communications will only be via the website and parish noticeboards.

3.1. 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.
- if it is official Council business, it will be moderated by either the Clerk to the Council or nominated Parish Councillor(s).
- not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

3.2 Public usage policy

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Council Facebook page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council’s aims and objectives, we require all users to follow these guidelines:

- be considerate and respectful of others - vulgarity, threats or abusive language will not be tolerated.
- differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone will not be permitted.
- share freely and be generous with official national, County, District and Parish Council posts but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.

The Facebook page is not monitored 24 hours a day 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 public social media posts to the Council.

Sending a message or posting via Facebook will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and we will not be obliged to respond through these channels. Instead, please make direct contact with the Clerk (clerk@thornburyhamlets.com) and/or members of the Council by sending an email or letter.

We retain the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- obscene or racist content.
- personal attacks, insults, or threatening language.
- potentially libellous or defamatory statements.
- plagiarised material; any material in violation of any laws, including copyright.
- private, personal information published without consent.
- information or links unrelated to the purpose of the forum.
- allegations of a breach of a Council's policy or the law.

Any information posted on social media not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. Serious or repeat offenders will be blocked from the Council's page.

4. Parish Council email policy

The Clerk to the Parish Council has a specific Council email address – clerk@thornburyhamlets.com. The Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received by the Council 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/or 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, if appropriate, copy to the Clerk. Any emails sent to the Clerk or Councillors in their official capacity will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act 2018.

Councillors should not forward personal information on to other people or groups outside of the Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all email correspondence is kept.

This policy was adopted at a meeting on **11th February 2021** and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate.