



2026

WOOTTON PARISH COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA, NOTICEBOARD, NEWSLETTER AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY



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Version History

Version	Reviewed at	Approved at
Version 1.00	Full Council meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 6 th August 2014	Full Council meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 6 th August 2014
Version 1.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 20 th May 2015	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 20 th May 2015
Version 1.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 11 th May 2016	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 11 th May 2016
Version 1.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 10 th May 2017	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 10 th May 2017
Version 1.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 9 th May 2018	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 9 th May 2018
Version 2.00	Full Council meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 13 th June 2018	Full Council meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 13 th June 2018
Version 2.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 15 th May 2019	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 15 th May 2019
Version 2.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 5 th May 2021	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 5 th May 2021
Version 2.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 11 th May 2022	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 11 th May 2022
Version 2.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 17 th May 2023	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 17 th May 2023
Version 3.00	Full Council meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 13 th December 2023	Full Council meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 13 th December 2023
Version 3.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 8 th May 2024	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 8 th May 2024
Version 3.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 14 th May 2025	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 14 th May 2025
Version 3.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 13 th May 2026	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 13 th May 2026

To be reviewed at each Annual Council Meeting.

Social Media, Newsletter and Electronic Communication Policy

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables Wootton 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, Facebook page, Twitter account and uses email to communicate. 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's Facebook page and Twitter account intend to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our parish and promote our community positively.

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 it does not own the copyright;
- Not contain any personal information;
- If it is official Parish Council business it will be moderated by either the Chair/Vice Chair of the Parish Council or the Clerk to the Council;
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising or promotions, nor will it be used as a platform for disparaging comments.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Parish Council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Parish 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 Parish Council members or staff, will not be permitted.
- Share freely and be generous with official Parish Council posts, but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.
- Stay on topic.
- Refrain from using the Parish 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 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 Clerk to the Council or Councillors by emailing.

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 Parish Councils' policy or the law.

The Parish Councils' response to any communication 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 Parish Councils' discretion based on the message received, given the 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 Parish Council may post a statement that '*A post breaching the Parish Council's Social Media Policy has been removed*'. If the post alleges a breach of a Parish Council's policy or the law the person who posted it will be asked to submit a formal complaint to the Parish Council or report the matter to the Police as soon as possible to allow due process.

Parish Council Website

Where necessary, the Parish Council may direct those contacting it to its website to see the required information, or the question may be forwarded to a Councillor for consideration and response. The Parish Council may not respond to every comment received, particularly if experiencing a heavy workload.

The Parish 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 will be responsible for maintaining the content and ensuring that it meets the Parish Council's 'rules and expectation' for the website. The Parish Council reserves the right to remove any or all of a local group's information from the website if it feels that the content does not meet the Parish Council's 'rules and expectation' for its website. Where content on the website is maintained by a local group it should be clearly marked that such content is not the direct responsibility of the Parish Council.

The Clerk to the Council is responsible for approving and publishing content to the website and Facebook page. On occasion, requests for information may be forwarded to a Member(s) for their consideration and response (which in return will be directed back via the Clerk to the Council).

Wootton Parish Council's website is an integral part of the Parish Council. Its purpose is to communicate with residents, village clubs, societies and organisations as well as external bodies including Bedford Borough Council and Local and/or Central Government organisations. Wootton Parish Council will aim to ensure that all information within the website is up-to-date and relevant.

The following items may be included, but others may be included at the Clerk's discretion:

E-edition of Wootton News.
 Electronic noticeboard.
 Information on village clubs, societies and organisations.
 Links to the following external websites: Bedford Borough Council, Forest of Marston Vale, Healthwatch (Bedford Borough) and The Higgins Museum, Bedford.
 Links to approved charities (as requested).
 List of future meetings.
 Parish Council agendas.
 Parish Council committees.
 Parish Council financial information, as permitted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (as amended).
 Parish Council minutes.
 Parish Council policies and procedures.
 Parish Council members information – including photograph, contact telephone and email address, and postal address.
 Report it forms.
 Upcoming village or Borough events.

Notices for publication should be emailed to the Clerk to the Council.

The following will not be included:

Articles affiliated to, or promoting any political organisation.
Commercial advertisements.
Publicity for any non-charitable fund-raising event.

Parish Council Email

The Clerk to the Council has their own Council email address: Clerk@Wootton-PC.gov.uk. The email account is monitored mainly during office hours, Monday to Friday, and the Parish Council aims to reply to all questions sent as soon as possible. An 'out of office' message will be used when appropriate.

The Clerk to the Council 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 Parish Council will usually come from the Clerk to the Council, and/or otherwise will always be copied to the clerk. All new emails requiring data to be passed on, will be followed up with a Data Consent Form for completion before action is taken with that correspondence.

Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views, if appropriate, copy to the Clerk. NB: Emails 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.
Do not forward personal information on to other people or groups outside of the Parish Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act in all their work on behalf of the Parish Council. As more and more information becomes available at the press of a button, it is vital that all information is treated sensitively and securely. 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 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.

Parish Council Noticeboards (including the electronic noticeboard available via the website)

The following items may be included, others may be at the Clerk's discretion. Please note no commercial or political activities are included in the following list:

Information on village events.
Information on wider local events **if space permits**.
Parish Council agendas.
Publicity for local authorities or non-profit organisations.

NOTICES FOR OTHER VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS WILL BE INCLUDED, SUBJECT TO SPACE AND THE CONDITIONS ABOVE.

ALL NOTICES FOR THE NOTICEBOARD MUST BE SENT TO THE CLERK IN HARD COPY. THE PARISH COUNCIL WILL NOT COVER THE COST OF PRINTING NOTICES FOR ANY OTHER ORGANISATIONS.

Wootton Newsletter

Articles should be submitted electronically to the Editor and Editor-in-Chief (Wootton.News@Wootton-PC.gov.uk and Clerk@Wootton-PC.gov.uk). Every effort will be made to include all articles, but the Parish Council reserves the right not to include articles due to space issues or content (please refer to the criteria listed under Social Media, Newsletter and Electronic Communication Policy). The Editor and Editor-in-Chief also reserve the right to amend or remove content from any article considered in breach of the criteria listed under Social Media, Newsletter and Electronic Communication Policy without reference to the author/submitter.

Wootton News is overseen by an Editorial subgroup of the Parish Council. While every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this newsletter is accurate, the Parish Council does not accept responsibility for any errors or omissions. Please note articles written by individuals do not necessarily represent the views of the Parish Council.

Please refer to the Wootton News with regard to the submission of advertisements.