

The Policy.

This Policy will cover all issues relating to the use of electronic information in the form of Emails, Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApps and any other similar Social Media that is used by Sellindge Parish Council, members in their capacity as a Councillor and in their private lives and all staff and Volunteers. It is also the policy that will be used to regulate the use of voice recording, filming and the taking of pictures during Parish Council and Committee Meetings.

Key Aims.

It will set down rules governing the use of the all electronic Information.

- It will ensure that everyone associated with the Parish Council gives out correct information if asked and, in the manner agreed by the Council.
- It will protect the reputation of the Council and its employees and Members.
- Provide guidance and hopefully prevent any pitfalls.

The Legal Bit.

The Local Government Act 1986 & 1988, the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960, The Freedom of Information Act and the Transparency Code 2015 is the legislation that govern Local Councils and everyone that this policy is for should have this in mind when using data of any type, written or electronic.

In Addition, the Standing Orders of the Council and the Code of Conduct for Councillors are also important when dealing with the public in the written or electronic form and need to be adhered to at all times

Filming, voice recording and photography at meetings.

Written permission should always be obtained prior to the meeting. While this is not a legal requirement, it would enable the Chairman and or Clerk to ensure that facilities are put in place to assist the person who wishes to voice record, film and take pictures

This will also allow the Chairman of the Council or the Committee to arrange seating so that the person filming or recording:

- Will not disrupt the meeting
- Will not film, record or take pictures of anyone young or vulnerable, or those who do not wish to be filmed, recorded or have their pictures taken.
- The right to refuse any of the above should be respected.
- Can be made aware of any confidential item on the agenda that will be excluded from filming or being recorded as allowed by law to exclude members of the press and the public.

The Clerk with the Chairman of the meeting will not withhold permission without good reason.

If the Chairman of the meeting considers that filming or voice recording or the taking of pictures is becoming intrusive, or preventing those present to comment or join in the debate, the Chairman will request that the activity is stopped until such time as the intrusive nature has been resolved.

If getting permission prior to the meeting is not possible then the person requiring the permission should arrive early so that they can speak to the Clerk and/or Chairman before the meeting starts. (This should be only in exceptional circumstances)

The Parish Council is not obliged to provide any filming or voice recording or camera equipment.

The person filming or voice recording is responsible for obtaining consent from the members of the public prior to the meeting and must respect anyone's decision to abstain from being filmed or recorded.

These regulations will only apply to formal meetings where decisions are to take place; they will not apply to working groups or other informal meetings where decisions are not made.

Emails.

Sellindge Parish Council uses emails to communicate with members of the public, outside organisations, other local government bodies and each other.

Members, at this time, use their own laptops and computers for the sending of emails and other work related to the Parish Council.

Members should be aware these emails can be requested under the Data Protection Act 2000, a Data Access Request, or Freedom of Information. Therefore, care should be taken to ensure that each Councillor keeps all Parish Council communication within its own separate file, which must be protected by passwords; (this will prevent accidental access by other family members if the laptop or computer is used by more than person in the house.)

Must not pass on any passwords to anyone even within their own family.

May use an encryption to further protect files.

To ensure good practice in sending emails:

- Reply only to those who need to see them, try not to 'reply all' if it is obvious from the originator that only they need a reply.
- Never forward information of a confidential nature.
- Any information sent by email should always be in accordance with the Parish Council policy on communication.

- Comments of a personal nature, or that which could be offensive or abusive would constitute unacceptable behaviour; and would be contrary to the Standings Orders of the Parish Council.
- Emails which constitute harassment and bullying will be contrary to the Councillors Code of Conduct and will be reported to the monitoring officer at Folkestone & Hythe District Council.

Social Media.

Twitter and Facebook and other message platforms

The Council does not manage its own social media platforms, however Sellindge Village has various Pages.

If Council members regularly read, or comment on these pages they must be aware of copyrights.

Councillors, if they reply to comments or messages on Facebook or Twitter must ensure that they do not give out confidential information or any decisions made by the Parish Council that has not yet been made public.

Differing opinions are useful and helps the Parish Council when considering issues at meetings and committees and should be encouraged.

Posts should not engage in threats, abusive language neither should pictures of a sexual nature be uploaded or forwarded to others.

The Parish Council cannot always respond to individual comments, in fact it may not be useful to do so; but if it is noted that a theme is emerging, the Parish Council will consider the theme at a meeting or pass on the information to any relevant organisation that can help.

Whether a Councillor, member of staff or the public need to contact the Parish Council, it is considered that Facebook or Twitter will not be considered as a formal contact for official purposes. Any issues that require a definitive response from the Parish Council must be addressed to the Parish Council via the Clerk by Email or letter and should be signed, no correspondence will be entered into if the email or letter is not signed, or a phone call.

Any private, personal information, violation of any laws or plagiarised materials, will be removed.

Sellindge Parish Council Website.

Sellindge Parish Council has a Website and this is maintained by staff employed by the Parish Council.

The website is to ensure that information relevant to the Parish Council and its environs is available to a wider audience as well as those who live in the village of Sellindge. It gives information on the work of the Parish Council, when meetings are taking place and allows Minutes of those meetings to be accessible.

Information is checked prior to being placed on the website, and is correct at the time of the uploading to the Website.

Any links placed on the website are for ease of finding information they are not an endorsement of any of their services.

Pictures placed on the website are for historical and social interest only.

Permission will be gained for any pictures that can identify individuals, unless those individuals are deceased or unable to be contacted.

Any group pictures will be removed if a request is made by an individual who is present within the group picture.

A bit more legal stuff.

While this policy cannot control what individuals do within any personal Electronic platforms they use; it is expected that as a Councillor, staff or volunteer, comments must not be derogatory of the Council as this undermines the Parish Council.

Each Councillor will be given a copy of the Policy and they will be encouraged to adhere to the contents.

This policy will be reviewed at least once every two years or sooner if it is felt appropriate.

Date	Version	Written/checked	Adopted on
	Version 1	L Hedley	12 th April 2022
05/09/2025	Version 2	L. Hedley	9 th September 2025