



DITCHLING PARISH COUNCIL

Social Media and Press Policy

The Social Media and Press Policy was adopted by Ditchling Parish Council at its meeting on 23rd September 2025.

Social Media (General)

The Parish Clerk is the designated “Council” owner of the Council’s social media channels. Councillors may be appointed by the Parish Council to assist the Clerk to disseminate information. No account details may be changed without the permission of the Clerk.

Councillors are entitled to use any form of social media they wish in in their role as individual councillors'. but are asked to abide by this policy at all times when so doing.

The following guidelines will apply to online participation and set out the standards of behaviour expected as a representative of Ditchling Parish Council.

- Be aware of and recognise your responsibilities identified in this Social Media Policy.
- Remember that you are personally responsible for the content you publish on any form of social media. When referring to Parish Council activities ensure that content is factual and accurate.
- Never give out personal details of others such as home addresses and telephone numbers.
- Ensure that you handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the General Data Protection Regulations
- **Consider using a Disclaimer.** When using social media for personal purposes, you must not imply that you are speaking for the Council. Avoid use of the Council e-mail address, logos or other Council identification. Make it clear that what you say is representative of your personal views only. The following is an example of a disclaimer that should be used wherever possible. *“Statements and opinions expressed here are my own and do not necessarily represent those of the Parish Council”*
- Know your obligations: you must comply with other Council policies when using social media. For example, you should be careful not to breach Council confidentiality and proprietary information policies.
- Show respect to all. You should be respectful of the authority and employees. Derogatory comments are always wrong.

Use of Social Media (during meetings)

Below are some extra guidelines for Councillors to consider for the use of social media during meetings.

- Handheld devices and laptops are permitted for use during meetings to allow environmentally friendly and effective communication. The use of such devices is intended to improve communications during meetings – not to interrupt or distract anyone taking part. Ensure the volume on all electronic devices is turned to “mute”.
- Engaging fully in meetings shows respect to other councillors and members of the public. Real-time social media use is therefore discouraged. Any media uses by councillors during Council meetings should refer to the discussions which are taking place at the meeting. Live posts about other subjects may demonstrate that you are not engaging properly in the meeting.
- Councillors have a responsibility to take Council business seriously and it is not appropriate for members to use social media to tease or insult other members.
- Remember that if you break the law using social media (for example by posting something defamatory), you are personally responsible.

Dealing with the press and other media.

The first port of call for all press / media enquiries should be the Parish Clerk who will verify the identity of the caller by telephoning the company's advertised contact number.

Requests for statements will be discussed with the Parish Council Chair and / or the Chair of the relevant committee or the most appropriate Councillor with knowledge of the subject matter. Comments will only be given by the clerk as official spokesperson.

If the clerk is not available within the time prescribed by the media's deadline, the chair/vice chair may make the response.

The spokesperson will

- Respond quickly and effectively to press / media enquiries in an open and honest manner
- Promote the Parish Council in a positive and proactive manner.
- Be receptive to any reasonable requests for photographic opportunities or interviews if possible.
- Be respectful of the confidential nature of information which is retained by the Council on individual cases or other matters which are officially specified as confidential.
- Keep members informed.