

Electronic Communication & Social Media Policy

1. What is the Policy for?

- This policy relates to the creation and management of digital, social media and electronic communication channels by Hillam Parish Council (HPC).
- The aim of this policy is to set down rules and regulations (consider clear expectations here?)to ensure proper use of any channel used by HPC.
- The Council communicates through its website, a Facebook page, Instagram and email. Promoting our community positively, these electronic channels enable HPC to provide information or updates and to advertise activities or opportunities, within our local area.

2. Code of conduct

- Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act in all their work on behalf of the Council.
- Communications from the Council will:
 - i. Be civil, respectful and relevant;
 - ii. Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
 - iii. Not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright;
 - iv. Not contain any personal information;
 - v. Be moderated by either the Chair/Vice Chair of the Council or the Clerk to the Council, if it is official Council business.
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising. To ensure that all discussions on the Council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives, all users will follow these guidelines:
 - i. To be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarity, threats or abusive language will not be tolerated.
 - ii. Differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including the Council members or staff, will not be permitted.
 - iii. To share freely, but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.
 - iv. To stay on topic.
 - v. To refrain from using the Council's Facebook or Instagram pages for commercial purposes or to advertise, market or sell products.

3. Hillam Parish Council Website

- In order to fulfil its legal obligation to be accessible and comply with both the Transparency Code and GDPR, the Hillam Parish Council website will:
 - i. Have clear content with a logical structure and organisation to assist screen readers
 - ii. Have assistive technology compatibility
 - iii. Be user friendly and be easy to navigate
 - iv. Have accessible documents, including PDFs
 - v. Provide information about contacting the council
- When appropriate, we may direct anyone contacting us to our website, to see the required information.

- The Council may, at its discretion, allow approved local groups to present information about the group's activities.

4. Hillam Parish Council email

- The Clerk to the parish council has their own Hillam Parish Council email address: clerk@hillamparishcouncil.gov.uk
- This email account is monitored by the Clerk, who works part-time and flexibly. While every effort is made to check messages daily during working hours, this may occasionally not be possible. During periods of annual leave, alternative contact details will be provided in the Clerk's out-of-office message.
- Up to date contact information for all members of the Parish Council, can be found on the Parish Council's website: <http://hillamparishcouncil.gov.uk>
- The Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and passing on any relevant mail to councillors or external agencies for information and/or action. Communications on behalf of the Council will usually come from the Clerk, and/or otherwise will always be copied to the Clerk.
- Individual councillors have their own councillor .gov.uk email account which is only used for HPC business. They are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views, if appropriate, copy to the Clerk. Any 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.
- Personal information shall not be forwarded or shared with people or groups outside of the Council; this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

5. WhatsApp

- Council members and the Clerk may use WhatsApp as a convenient way to communicate at times. This policy also applies to such messages.

6. Video Conferencing (Teams, Zoom)

- HPC does not routinely use such platforms. However, should the need arise, then this policy would apply to its use.

7. Social Media

- HPC uses Facebook and Instagram.
- Only information regarding HPC will be posted. However, at the discretion of the Clerk or Council, events taking place in the local area may be promoted.
- The accounts will only link to pages of a local government organisation or organisations/causes relating to the Parish or local area.
- No religious or political views will be expressed.
- "Followers" will not be allowed to post new topics to the Facebook page. However, "followers" will be able to 'like' and 'comment' on a post, and share topics created by Hillam Parish Council.
- Posts on the Facebook page will be available for all users of Facebook to see.
- The Hillam Parish Council logo will be the profile picture for everyone to see.
- Photo Albums will be open for everyone to view.

- Photographs uploaded will not have direct view of any child's face without the prior consent of their guardian.
- The accounts will be maintained by HPC or the Clerk who will remove messages which do not comply with the Code of Conduct.
- If "friends" or "followers" are repeatedly abusing the Parish Council's accounts then they will be removed from the friends/followers list and unable to interact with the accounts. The Council may post a statement that, 'A post breaching the Council's Social Media Policy has been removed'.
- If any matters raised are relevant and need to be discussed by HPC then further information may be sought and brought to the relevant council meeting.
- The account will not be used for playing games, adding applications, or anything of a personal nature. Contravention of this rule could result in disciplinary procedures.
- Private messages will be sent in response to anyone sending an initial private message to the Parish accounts. If a "simple" response does not satisfy the enquiry then the person will be asked to email the Council with the request for comment and the Clerk's email will be provided. Any posts by "friends" or "followers" raising issues or questions that cannot be answered "simply" will be dealt with separately via email. The Clerk's email address will be provided.
- If the post alleges a breach of the Council policy or the law, the person who posted it will be asked to submit a formal complaint to the Council or report the matter to the Police as soon as possible to allow due process.

8. Changes

- This policy can be altered by HPC at any time, to allow immediate action should the unexpected arise.
- Changes to the policy will be highlighted at the next Parish Council meeting to keep members abreast of the changes and for their approval. In any event, this policy will be kept under review by HPC.

Version	Date of Meeting of Adoption
V4	3/11/2025