Ryhall and Belmesthorpe Parish Council's Communication Policy

Adopted: 3 March 2025

Overview
This policy sets out how Ryhall and Belmesthorpe Parish Council (RPC) communicates with the community across various channels, including social media, printed materials, emails, noticeboards, and verbal statements. The aim is to ensure that all communication is clear, professional, objective, and in line with the Council's responsibilities.

The term "social media" is used to describe any kind of tool that can be used for sharing what you know, including (but not limited to): blogs, photo sharing, video sharing, social networks, mobile phone applications, texting, wikis, gaming and collaboration tools.

RPC uses social media for communication and engagement. Its main aim is to ensure that the community is aware of the Parish Council, what it does and how members of the Parish can be involved in its work (engaged).

Platforms
The Parish Council will review its chosen social media platforms annually via this policy. Currently, the agreed platform is/are:
- Facebook page (not a group)
- The monthly Village New Magazine
- Noticeboards situation 1 x Ryhall Flag Pole on St Johns Close 1 x Main Street Belmesthorpe

Facebook
Name
The name of the Facebook page will be: "Ryhall and Belmesthorpe Parish Council". It will be listed as a 'Government Organisation' and any contact details will be directed to the Parish Clerk and the Parish Council's official website.

Administration
The Facebook page will always have at least three administrators/moderators: the Clerk, the Chair, and one other nominated member of the Parish Council who will be voted in at a full Parish Council meeting. The administrators may wish to set up a Facebook proTile for their role, separate from their personal proTile, but there is no expectation for them to.

Once one of the administrators/moderators is no longer in role, they must be removed from the page immediately, and those new in role added.

About
In the About section, the purpose of the page will be outlined, and the rules published regarding its use and public access (e.g. commenting) which can be found within this policy. Contact details will also be listed, all relevant to the Parish Clerk and the Parish Council's website.

Posts
All posts will be:
• professional;
• objective;
• relevant.

Posts will only include:

• Advertising the Parish Council's open meetings (regular and extraordinary) as well as its agendas and minutes (which could be the link to the ofTicial Parish Council website pages).
• Adverts for free community events within the Parish (maximum two posts per event/ group in a 2-month period).
• Information regarding the Parish Council including surveys, elections, local plan and other relevant work.
• Information that could impact the Parish community such as: road closures; planning permission of several or more homes/businesses; changes to public transport or publicly funded institutions e.g. school, library.

Posts will not include:
• Advertising for private businesses or groups that are not open to all members of the community;
• Advertising for religious groups or events;
• Advertising for public events that include any entry charges;
• Advertising for any groups that could be deemed as non-inclusive, abusive or offensive;
• Information about any events, groups, news or incidents outside of the Parish of Ryhall and Belmesthorpe.

Comments
To avoid the potential for abusive or unhelpful comments, or comments containing misinformation or spam, each time a post is published, commenting will be turned off to the general public by clicking on the three dots > 'Who can comment on your post' > 'ProTiles and pages you mention'.

Chat
All moderators/administrators will be able to access Facebook Chat facility. This should be checked and responded to at least once every Tive working days. There is no expectation of the moderators/administrators to reply in any meaningful way – they can simply signpost questions and comments to the Clerk by sharing their email address: clerk@ryhallparishcouncil.co.uk.

Following
The Parish Council's Facebook page will NOT follow other pages or groups to avoid accusations of bias, other than the following ofTicial pages that would be relevant to all in the community:
• Rutland County Council
• Rutland Libraries
• Ryhall CE Academy

Data
The page will not post names or photos of anyone without their express permission.

Written Correspondence

Email
• The Parish Clerk is responsible for responding to official emails on behalf of the Council.
• Emails from the Council will be professional, factual, and in line with GDPR regulations.
• All Councillors using email for official business must use designated Council email addresses.
• No confidential information should be shared via email unless necessary and with appropriate safeguards.
• Official correspondence from residents should be addressed to the Clerk.

Printed Materials & Noticeboards
• The Council will use local noticeboards and the Village News Magazine to provide updates.
• Official notices (e.g., meeting agendas, minutes, public consultations) will be displayed in a timely manner.
• Materials must be clear, accurate, and adhere to Council guidelines.
• Any third-party requests to display information on noticeboards must be approved by the Clerk.

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<u>Public Correspondence</u>

Statements & Media Relations
• Any public statements on behalf of the Council must be approved by the Chair and Clerk.
• Councillors must not make unauthorised statements representing the Council.
• If approached by the media, Councillors should direct inquiries to the Clerk.
• Statements must be neutral, factual, and non-political.

Meetings & Community Engagement
• The Council encourages public attendance and engagement at meetings.
• All Council meetings will be conducted professionally and in accordance with Standing Orders.
• Surveys and consultations will be used to gather community input on key issues.

Review & Amendments
This policy will be reviewed annually and amended as necessary to reflect changes in communication channels and best practices