

GREAT YELDHAM PARISH COUNCIL



COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

This policy has been developed to:

- Ensure that staff, councillors and volunteers understand what Great Yeldham Parish Council (GYPC) is trying to achieve, working towards a common goal.
- Give staff, councillors and volunteers the information they need to do their jobs effectively.
- Encourage people to put forward their ideas for improvement.
- Provide guidelines on the acceptable methods of communicating with partners, clients, stakeholders and other parties.

As a general principle no member of staff, councillor or volunteer shall give the impression that they are representing, giving opinions, or otherwise making statements on behalf of GYPC unless appropriately authorised to do so.

All communications whatever their form should comply with GYPC's visual identity guidelines. This means the correct use of the Parish Council logo using the correct colours. The logo is stored on the GYPC computer. Any queries will be resolved by the Parish Clerk.

METHODS AND STYLES OF COMMUNICATION

- **Post**
- **Electronic Mail**
- **Telephone**
- **Face to face meetings**
- **Website**
- **Media Releases**
- **Interviews (print media, radio, television)**
- **Social Media**
- **Photographs**

POST

Letters should be printed on the GYPC letterhead template using Arial or Calibri typeface in 12pt and include the following information:

- Date
- Full name and address of recipient
- "Dear <first name>" only if the recipient is well known to the writer
- "Dear Dr/Rev/Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss <surname>" if the recipient is not well known to the writer.
- Avoid the impersonal "Dear Sir or Madam" – always make the effort to use the name of the recipient.

- Leave double space and in bold, provide a reference line for the subject of the letter. If the letter is a reply, use the originator's reference if applicable.
- End letters with "Yours sincerely" unless you have been forced to address the letter to "Dear Sir or Madam", in which case you should use "Yours faithfully".
- Leave space for your signature and then insert your full name on one line with your job title on the next line.
- If the letter is to be copied to another person, the words: "c.c. <title> <first name> <surname>" should appear after a double space from the job title.
- If there is an enclosure the words "enc." should appear after a double space from the job title or the c.c. line if present.

Flyers and brochures should not be used without the approval of the Parish Clerk.

ELECTRONIC MAIL

The terms "electronic mail" and "email" are used interchangeably throughout this policy.

Those who use GYPC electronic mail services must do so responsibly, that is, in compliance with United Kingdom and European laws, with this and other GYPC policies and regulations (see policies), and with normal standards of professional and personal courtesy and conduct.

Access to GYPC electronic mail services may be wholly or partially restricted by GYPC Parish Clerk, for good cause, without prior notice and without the consent of the email user.

This policy applies to:

- All electronic mail systems and services provided or owned by GYPC.
- All users, holders, and uses of GYPC email services.
- All GYPC email records in the possession of GYPC staff or volunteers or other email users of electronic mail services provided by GYPC.

Readability is improved on screen by using a non-serif typeface in 10pt or 12pt. This would include Arial, Calibri or Verdana.

Staff should not use personal email addresses for GYPC business except in exceptional circumstances. If a personal email address is used for any reason, a copy of the email must also be sent to the relevant GYPC email address. All email messages sent using a GYPC email address should include the following footer (shown in blue):

<Firstname> <Surname>

<Job Title>

Great Yeldham Parish Council

The following footer should be added to all emails.

Great Yeldham Parish Council

Reading Room, High Street, Great Yeldham, Halsted, Essex. CO9 4ER.

Office Opening hours: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 10.30 am – 1.30 pm

Tel: 01787 237832

email: greatyeldhampc@btinternet.com

<https://greatyeldhampc.co.uk/>

GYPC does not guarantee the confidentiality of electronic mail and it is not safe to assume that email is either confidential or secure. For example, email intended for one person may sometimes be widely distributed because of the ease with which recipients can forward it to others. A reply to an email message, intended only for the originator of the message, which is posted on an electronic bulletin board or through a mailing list, may be distributed to all subscribers to the service. Also, even after you delete an email record it may persist on backup facilities.

Email, whether or not created or stored on GYPC equipment, may constitute a formal email record and be subject to disclosure under the Data Protection Act 1998 or other laws, or as a result of litigation.

There is no guarantee, unless “authenticated” mail systems are used, that email received was in fact sent by the purported sender, since it is relatively straightforward for senders to disguise their identity. Also, email that is forwarded may also be modified. As authentication technology is not widely used at present, you should check with the purported sender to validate authorship or authenticity, if there is any doubt.

Encryption technology enables the encoding of email so that for all practical purposes it cannot be read by anyone who does not possess the right key. You should not send confidential or sensitive personal information by email unless you use encryption or password protection.

GYPC does not currently use email for the conclusion of contracts. You should be aware, however, that email messages may form legally binding contracts particularly if signed by means of certified digital signatures.

You should not rely on email for record-keeping purposes. For example, in the absence of authentication systems, it is difficult to guarantee that email documents have not been altered, intentionally or inadvertently. Where long-term accessibility is an issue, you should transfer email records to a more lasting medium or format.

Do not release confidential information via a mailing list, on-line discussion group or electronic notice board. Disclosure of personal information via the Internet must comply with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Any file, which is downloaded from the Internet or attached to an email, should be scanned for viruses before it is run or accessed. If you are in doubt about the safety of opening an email attachment, delete the email without opening it. If you recognise the sender contact him or her to ask for it to be re-sent with confirmation that it is a genuine attachment. If you do not recognise the sender, do not make any contact.

When you leave GYPC, permanently or for periods of leave, you should make arrangements which ensure continuity of GYPC business. These may include the handing over, or forwarding, of relevant GYPC email records or messages to an appropriate member of staff, or directing regular contacts to address future messages to another member of staff or volunteer.

The email accounts of persons no longer associated with GYPC will be cancelled and no personal forwarding services will be provided.

The laws applying to copyright, data protection, libel, sexual harassment and other offences are applicable to email messages and attachments. You should make yourself familiar with all the relevant laws and GYPC policies.

Any electronic mail address or account associated with GYPC, or any sub-unit of GYPC, assigned by GYPC to individuals, sub-units or functions of GYPC, is the property of GYPC. Those who use GYPC electronic mail services must do so responsibly, that is, in compliance with United Kingdom and European laws, with this and other GYPC policies and regulations (see policies), and with normal standards of professional and personal courtesy and conduct.

Access to GYPC electronic mail services may be wholly or partially restricted by GYPC, for good cause, without prior notice and without the consent of the email user.

GYPC shall only permit the inspection, monitoring, or disclosure of electronic mail without the consent of the holder of such email (i) when required by and consistent with law; (ii) when there is reason to believe that a violation of law or of a GYPC policy has taken place; (iii) when there are compelling circumstances; or (iv) under time-dependent, critical operational circumstances.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action being taken, or access to GYPC facilities being withdrawn, or a criminal prosecution.

TELEPHONE

Staff should make every effort to answer incoming calls as soon as possible. The caller should be greeted with:

“Great Yeldham Parish Council, this is <name>” or “Great Yeldham Parish Council, <name> speaking.” It is important to identify both the organisation and the identity of the person receiving the call.

Messages should receive a response within 3 working days.

FACE TO FACE MEETINGS

Face to face meetings will occur for a number of different reasons and include:

- GYPC staff, councillors or volunteers representing the organisation on committees, working groups, to provide advice, etc.
- Internal meetings.
- Interviews:
 - With staff
 - With volunteers
 - With councillors
 - With media representatives

It is important to adhere to the principles of this policy in all interaction with other people or organisations, and to document agreement on key issues discussed. There must be an agenda for all formally constituted meetings. Meetings need to be structured and controlled to encourage involvement and contributions. Minutes of the meetings should ideally be available as soon as possible after the meeting, and must be filed in an appropriate manner.

Interviews with media representatives require prior approval from either the Parish Clerk or the Chair and the Leader of the communications group.

WEBSITE

It is the responsibility of the members of staff or councillors who are authorised to update the website to keep any passwords completely secure.

All information must be maintained so that it is up-to-date and any time-bound items removed from the website as soon as the 'do-by' date has been reached.

MEDIA RELEASES

Media releases require approval by either the Parish Clerk or the responsible councillor. Any staff member, councillor or volunteer may suggest topics that can be covered by a media release, but they may not issue any public statement or media release personally.

NOTICE BOARDS

Content on public display boards shall be approved by at least one of following:

- Parish Clerk
- Leader of the Communications Group

All information must be maintained so that it is up-to-date and any time-bound items removed from the notice board as soon as the 'do-by' date has been reached.

SOCIAL MEDIA

No member of staff, councillor or volunteer shall give the impression that they are representing, giving opinions, or otherwise making statements on behalf of GYPC unless appropriately authorised to do so.

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure GYPC's legal and effective use of social media.

A breach of these guidelines may constitute a breach of an employee's terms and conditions of employment and/or misconduct.

GYPC has Twitter and Facebook accounts, although these may be varied over time.

The social media platforms are managed by the Parish Clerk and a responsible councillor, although other members of staff or councillors have access to these and are encouraged to use them appropriately. This may be varied over time to include suitably experienced volunteers. The social media platforms are linked to GYPC's website.

GYPC recognises that its social media platforms are a vital link to its residents and other councils.

The platforms can be used to:

- Share news, information, events, changes, opportunities and more, from GYPC and the wider voluntary and community sector.
- Actively engage with residents and other councils.

All staff members, councillors and volunteers using GYPC's social media platforms are responsible for their actions and must ensure that:

- Respect is shown to all individuals and communities interacted with.
- All communication is polite and respectful of others' opinions.
- The accepted cultural and behavioural norms in using the social media platforms are adhered to.
- All copyright, privacy, financial disclosure and other applicable laws are complied with.

Staff members, councillors and volunteers must also ensure that:

- All information published is accurate.
- Only council related information is published.
- All information published is not obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, discriminatory or hateful to another person or entity.
- All information published does not harm or compromise GYPC's reputation in any way.
- No personal information is disclosed, either about the author or anyone else.
- References to matters of politics and religion are avoided.

If any staff member or volunteer has any doubts about the acceptability of information for publishing they should contact the Parish Clerk who will make the final decision on whether or not to publish.

GYPC would like to offer the following [guidance](#) in respect of personal or third party social media accounts. Comments posted on personal or third party accounts could have a serious impact on the brand and reputation of GYPC as an organisation.

- Staff members, councillors and volunteers should remember that actions and opinions posted on personal and third party social media platforms may reflect adversely on GYPC as an organisation.
- Staff members are reminded of an obligation as per their terms and conditions of employment to not engage in conduct tending to bring them or GYPC into disrepute.
- Councillors are reminded of an obligation as per their agreement to not engage in conduct tending to bring them or GYPC into disrepute.
- Staff members, councillors and volunteers should be mindful of any restrictions in place regarding confidentiality and permissions, e.g. confidential information provided to them in a council capacity, when using any personal or third party platforms.
- Staff members, councillors and volunteers are reminded that there is the potential for words/actions/pictures to be forwarded and downloaded across the globe, even with privacy measures in place.

Photographs - The Publishing of Photographs taken at Events

The Parish Council will carefully consider their legal obligations under the data protection act when considering the use of photographs in publications, on the website, notice board, 4 Village Magazine and supplying these to third parties. If the

Parish Council is to use photographs in any publications or supply these to a third party, the Parish Council should consider undertaking the following safeguards.

- Posters that contain the relevant information - that official photos will be taken, who will be photographed (children, competition winners, the general public, etc), how to recognise the photographers and what the photographs will be used for (local newspaper, council website with link to and from other web sites, council newsletter, and provided for 3rd partner organisations for further publication etc).
- Posters can be placed in the village hall, in shops, website and notice board, wherever they will be widely seen, etc.
- Posters should be displayed prominently at the event. The posters should contain the Council's name and who to contact to find out more information.
- Leaflets that provide the relevant information. They could be hand delivered, put in local newspapers, handed out at village events.
- Advertisement for the event in local press can also contain the relevant information.
- Put the relevant information on the council website, on the council's notice board or in local shops, pubs, etc.
- The photographers can inform potential subjects of the purpose of their photographs.

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the council and will be updated and amended in the light of emerging legislation, guidance and best practice.