



WhatsApp / Text and Email Policy

This Policy forms part of Gamston with West Drayton and Eaton Parish Council's Code of Conduct and applies to Councillors and the Clerk when using email, text or WhatsApp. (Text and WhatsApp are primarily between Councillors, the Parish Clerk).

When using e-mail to correspond with other Councillors, the Parish Clerk, residents, the District and County Councils, this should have regard to the following:

Risks:

- Breach of data protection and GDPR
- Summons for presentation to tribunals/courts
- Disclosure under Freedom of Information request
- Disenfranchise the public by conducting business remotely
- Non-compliance with democratic process

Do not:

- use language that could offend, discriminate or cause embarrassment
- discuss business that should not be seen/heard by the public
- write about matters declared to be confidential
- infringe copyright
- enter into contractual commitment or make representations by e-mail unless appropriate authority has been obtained
- send e-mails which you would not want a third party to read
- make statement(s) which is/are likely to create any liability for you or the Council

Etiquette:

- do not write in capitals
- use proper spelling, grammar & punctuation
- use appropriate terminology at start and end of text
- be polite and respectful
- use basic courtesy
- do not 'bully' or 'harass'
- cc all emails to

Use of the mobile phone application WhatsApp has become more and more relevant, largely replacing texting as one of the most popular forms of communication and with the ease of sending photographs and images, this is a much more instant way of assisting to deliver the Council's services and facilities, albeit in a more informal way.

All WhatsApp messages that require a formal decision or resolution are always backed up by emails and at Parish Council Committees (delegated powers) and Meetings.

WhatsApp also differs from other forms of social media such as Facebook in that comments cannot be seen publicly. Instead, they can only be viewed by individuals who are part of a particular WhatsApp focus group. It can assist with checking on grounds maintenance work and street furniture and means a more speedy and efficient service delivery to our residents because this form of communication is shared more instantly.

All WhatsApp groups set up by the Parish Council comply with the GDPR.

RULES FOR A WHATSAPP GROUP

At the outset everyone must consent prior to being put into a WhatsApp Group as their telephone number will be visible to all within the group, and personal telephone numbers cannot be communicated without consent.

1. This is a workplace group. It has been set up by the Parish Clerk, who will act as administrator.

They are not "moderators".

2. This group is intended as a convenient way to distribute information to colleagues quickly and efficiently and for colleagues to communicate easily with each other regarding work matters

3. Such a group is set up in a spirit of informal communication amongst a group of persons sharing the same common interest. In keeping with that spirit, it is not the intention that there ought to be an overly legalistic attitude towards its operation. However, the following ought to be adhered to:

a. The group is not to be used to discuss non-work related issues.

b. The group should not be used to express personal opinions or post private messages.

c. Any opinions expressed are the opinions of individual members. Group administrators are not responsible for any comments posted by individual members of the group.

d. It is not necessary to respond to every post unless it is requested e.g. RSVP.

When a busy user gets too many notifications, there is the chance that they will turn off the notifications, which undermines the efficiency of the facility.

e. If your message is not relevant to the majority of group members, please message the person directly rather than the entire group.

f. Inappropriate posts include using inappropriate language, insulting messages, voicing grievances with the workplace or with individual members of the group.

g. No comments should be made regarding colleagues, management, the Board, work policies or events.

h. In the event that there is a breach of any of the rules, the group administrator reserves the right to remove the transgressor from the group.

i. By participating in this WhatsApp Group, you agree to these group rules.

j. Participation is not obligatory and if you join, you have the option of leaving. We would hope that all participants can see the usefulness of the group and will co-operative accordingly.

4. Respect everyone's privacy – being part of this group requires mutual trust

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