

CRANFORD PARISH COUNCIL



WhatsApp Use Policy

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Introduction

This policy outlines the acceptable use of WhatsApp for internal communication within Cranford Parish Council to ensure sound information governance and effective dispute resolution.

1. Information Governance

- All council-related communications on WhatsApp must comply with the current legislation, including the Freedom of Information Act and Data Protection Act.
- Council members must use their official council WhatsApp group only for council-related communications.
- Messages that contain sensitive or confidential information should not be shared on WhatsApp.
- All council-related messages may be subject to disclosure under Freedom of Information requests.

2. Acceptable Use

- WhatsApp may be used for quick, informal communications regarding council matters, including the sharing of photos of council events, assets and projects.
- Official council business should be conducted through formal channels such as council email or meetings.
- Council members must maintain professionalism and respect in all communications.
- Use of the official council WhatsApp group for personal or non-council related matters is strictly prohibited.

3. Dispute Resolution

- Any disputes arising from the use of WhatsApp shall first be attempted to be resolved informally between the involved parties.
- If informal resolution is not possible, the matter should be brought to the attention of the clerk or chair.
- The clerk or chair will facilitate a resolution in accordance with the council's usual dispute resolution procedures.
- Records of the dispute and its resolution will be maintained as per the council's Records Retention policy.

4. Policy Enforcement

- Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the council's disciplinary procedures and/or removal from the WhatsApp group.
- Council members are expected to report any breaches of this policy to the clerk or chair.

5. Data Retention

- All WhatsApp communications related to council business will be archived for a period of six years.
- Council members are responsible for backing up important conversations and transferring them to the council's email system.
- Any personal data contained within WhatsApp messages must be handled in accordance with the council's Data Protection Policy.
- When data is no longer needed, or is out of date, it must be securely deleted in line with the council's Records Retention Policy.
- Any data breaches involving WhatsApp communications must be reported immediately in accordance with the council's data breach response procedure.

6. Policy Review

- This policy is designed to provide a framework for the responsible use of WhatsApp as a communication tool within Cranford Parish Council, ensuring that all communications are conducted in a manner that upholds the council's commitment to sound information governance, acceptable use, and effective dispute resolution
- This policy will be reviewed every two years to ensure it remains effective and compliant with relevant legislation.

Date Adopted: 16th September 2024

Minute Ref: 24/037

Date to be Reviewed: September 2026