



## Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

This policy provides guidance on how our organisation uses the internet and social media, and the procedures for doing so. It outlines how we expect officers, as well as volunteers and young people attending our youth club, to behave online. As an organisation, we commit to implementing this policy and addressing any concerns quickly and within these guidelines.

### Aims

The aim of this policy is:

- to protect individuals, including young people, involved with our organisation and who make use of technology (such as mobiles phones, games consoles and the internet) while in our care
- to provide Officers with policy and procedure information regarding online safety and inform them how to respond to incidents
- to ensure our organisation is operating in line with our values and within the law regarding how we behave online

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables the Credition Town Council (CTC) to interact in a way that improves the communications both within the council and between the Council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

CTC has:

- A website: [www.credition.gov.uk](http://www.credition.gov.uk)
- Facebook pages:
  - Credition Town Council
  - Credition Youth Service
  - Christmas in Credition
- Instagram:
  - Creditonyouthservice
  - Christmas\_in\_credition
- And also uses email to communicate (emails for all officers and members can be found on the website).

The council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time CTC may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur, this policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

### FACEBOOK & INSTAGRAM PAGES

CTC social media pages intend to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within the town and promote our community positively.

### Communications from CTC will meet the following criteria:

- Be civil, tasteful and relevant

- Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive
- Not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright
- Not contain any personal information.
- If it is official Council business it will be moderated by either the Town Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Chair of the Council or the Deputy Chair of the Council
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising
- All social media accounts will be password-protected, and at least 2 members of officers will have access to each account and password
- The accounts will be monitored by at least two designated members of officers in order to provide transparency
- Designated officers will remove inappropriate posts by young people, explaining why, and informing anyone who may be affected (as well as the parents of any young people involved)
- we'll make sure young people are aware of who manages our social media accounts and who to contact if they have any concerns about something that's happened online
- parent/guardians will need to give permission for photographs or videos of their child/young person to be posted on social media.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the council/youth work pages are productive, respectful and consistent with CTC's aims and objectives, we ask you to follow these guidelines:

- Be considerate and respectful of others; vulgarity, threats or abuse of language will not be tolerated
- Differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including members or officers, will not be permitted
- Share freely and be generous with official CTC posts but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due
- Stay on topic
- Refrain from using CTC's Facebook pages for commercial purposes or to advertise market or sell products.

The site is not monitored 24/7 and we will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, we will endeavour to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people or authorities. Please do not include personal/private information in your social media posts to us. Sending a message/post via Facebook or Twitter will not be considered as contacting CTC for official purposes and we will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through these channels. Instead, please make direct contact with the office and/or members of the council by emailing.

We retain the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- obscene or racist content
- personal attacks, insults, or threatening language
- potentially libellous statements.
- plagiarised material; any material in violation of any laws, including copyright
- private, personal information published without consent
- information or links unrelated to the content of the forum
- commercial promotions or spam
- alleges a breach of a Council's policy or the law.

CTC's response to any communication received not meeting the above criteria will be to either ignore, inform the sender of our policy or send a brief response as appropriate. This will be at CTC's discretion based on the message received, given our limited resources available. Any information posted on social media not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. Repeat offenders will be blocked from social media channels. CTC may post a statement that '*A post breaching CTC's Social Media Policy has been removed*'. If the post alleges a breach of a policy or the law the person who posted it will be asked to submit a formal complaint or report the matter to the Police as soon as possible to allow due process.

#### **What we expect of officers:**

- officers should be aware of this policy and behave in accordance with it
- officers should seek the advice of the town clerk if they have any concerns about the use of the internet or social media
- officers should communicate any messages they wish to send out to young people to the designated officers responsible for the organisation's online presence
- officers should not communicate with young people via personal accounts
- officers should not 'friend' or 'follow' young people from personal accounts on social media and maintain the same professional boundaries online as they would in person when using organisation accounts
- officers should make sure any content posted on public personal accounts is accurate and appropriate, as young people may 'follow' them on social media
- rather than communicating with parents through personal social media accounts, Officers should choose a more formal means of communication, such as face-to-face, in an email or in writing, or use an organisational account or website
- officers should avoid communicating with young people via email or organisational social media outside of normal office hours
- emails or messages should maintain the organisations tone and be written in a professional manner, e.g. in the same way you would communicate with fellow professionals, avoiding kisses (X's) or using slang or inappropriate language
- officers should not delete any messages or communications sent to or from organisation accounts
- officers should undertake all online safety training offered and gain a basic knowledge of the platforms young people use and how to report or remove inappropriate content online
- any concerns reported through social media should be dealt with in the same way as a face-to-face disclosure, according to our reporting procedures
- officers and young people must not engage in 'sexting' or send pictures to anyone that are obscene.

#### **What we expect of young people**

- young people should be aware of this online safety policy
- we expect young people's behaviour online to be consistent with the guidelines set out in our acceptable use statement
- young people should follow the guidelines set out in our acceptable use statement on all digital devices, including smart phones, tablets and consoles

#### **What we expect of parents/carers**

- parents/carers should be aware of this online safety policy and agree to its terms
- parents/carers should protect all children's privacy online and think carefully about what content they share online, where they share it and who they're sharing it with

- we expect parent/carers' behaviour online to be consistent with the guidelines set out in our acceptable use statement

### **TOWN COUNCIL WEBSITE**

Where necessary, we may direct those contacting us to our website to see the required information, or we may forward their question to one of our members for consideration and response. We may not respond to every comment we receive particularly if we are experiencing a heavy workload.

CTC may, at its discretion, allow and enable approved local groups to have and maintain a presence on its website for the purpose of presenting information about the group's activities. The local group would be responsible for maintaining the content and ensuring that it meets the 'rules and expectation' for the website. CTC reserves the right to remove any, or all, of a local group's information from the web site if it feels that the content does not meet the Council's 'rules and expectation' for its website. Where content on the website is maintained by a local group it should be clearly marked that such content is not the direct responsibility of CTC

### **TOWN COUNCIL EMAIL**

Officers have their own email addresses and these are advertised on the CTC website. Email accounts are monitored mainly during office hours, Monday to Friday, and we aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as we can. An 'out of office' message should be used when appropriate.

Officers are responsible for dealing with email received and passing on any relevant mail to members or external agencies for information and/or action. All communications on behalf of CTC will usually come from the Town Clerk or Assistant Clerk, and/or otherwise will always be copied to the Town Clerk. All new emails requiring data to be passed on, will be followed up with a Data Consent Form for completion before action is taken with that correspondence. Individual members are at liberty to communicate directly with parishioners in relation to their own personal views, if appropriate, copy to the Town Clerk. Any emails copied to the Town 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. Do not forward personal information on to other people or groups outside of CTC, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

### **MOBILE PHONES**

#### **Using mobile phones or other digital technology to communicate**

Members and officers may use mobile phones as a convenient way to communicate at times. All are reminded that this policy also applies to their use.

When using mobile phones (or other devices) to communicate by voice, video or text (including texting, email and instant messaging such as WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger), we'll take the following precautions to ensure young people's safety:

#### **Use of mobile phones at Youth Club**

So that all children can enjoy and actively take part in sports activities, we discourage the use of mobile phones during such activities. Young people under 13 may bring mobile phones but they may not use them – parents will be informed. Young people over 13 will be discouraged from using their mobile phones and will be told not to look at or share content with any young people under 13. Youth workers will monitor and challenge as appropriate.

As part of this policy we will:

- ensure all young people have read and understood the guidelines set out in our acceptable use statement on all digital devices, including smart phones, tablets and consoles
- make children aware of how and who to contact if there is an emergency or a change to previously agreed arrangements with the organisation
- inform parents of appropriate times they can contact children who are away at camps or away trips and discourage them from attempting contact outside of these times
- advise parents that it may not be possible to contact children during activities and provide a contact within the club or organisation who will be reachable should there be an emergency
- explain to children how using mobile phones during activities has an impact on their safe awareness of their environment, and their level of participation and achievement
- ensure appropriate parental controls are in place at WiFi level in Old Landscore School
- Provide appropriate training to officers working with young people regarding social media and challenging behaviours
- **officers** will avoid having children's personal mobile numbers and will instead seek contact through a parent at all times.

### **VIDEO CONFERENCING**

If this medium is used to communicate please note that this policy also applies to the use of video conferencing.

### **INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION WITHIN THE COUNCIL**

CTC is continually looking at ways to improve its working and the use of social media and electronic communications is a major factor in delivering improvement.

### **DATA PROTECTION**

Members are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act in all their work on behalf of CTC. As more and more information becomes available at the press of a button, it is vital that all information is treated sensitively and securely. Members are expected to maintain an awareness of the confidentiality of information that they have access to and not to share confidential information with anyone. Failure to properly observe confidentiality may be seen as a breach of CTC's Code of Conduct and will be dealt with through its prescribed procedures (at the extreme it may also involve a criminal investigation).

Members should also be careful only to cc essential recipients on emails i.e. to avoid use of the 'Reply to All' option if at all possible, but of course copying in all who need to know and ensuring that email trails have been removed.