

WhatsApp Use Policy

This policy outlines the acceptable use of WhatsApp for internal communication within Oakthorpe Donisthorpe & Acresford Parish Council (“the council”) to ensure sound information governance and effective dispute resolution.

Information Governance:

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

Acceptable Use:

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

Dispute Resolution:

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

Policy Enforcement:

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

Data Retention:

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 When data is no longer needed, or is out of date, it must be securely deleted in line with the council's Records Retention Policy.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

Policy Review:

- 6.1. This policy will be reviewed every two years to ensure it remains effective and compliant with relevant legislation.
- 6.2. This policy draft is designed to provide a framework for the responsible use of WhatsApp as a communication tool within the 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.