

Social Media Policy

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1. Introduction

Social media and networking websites have become a regular part of everyday life and many people enjoy membership to sites such as Facebook and Twitter. This policy provides Councillors and staff with guidelines on responsibilities of use of social media.

Currently only a Facebook page is used (in addition to the Council's website). This policy will be updated if and when any other social media channels are to be used.

2. When to use social media

2.1 General

The Parish Council's aim is to inform members of the community and the wider local area, through as many communication channels as possible, about what is happening within the Parish relevant to the Parish Council.

The Parish Council's social media channels supplement the information published on the website. Advantages of social media include:

- The Council can remind people of important events and alert followers to news
- The Parish Council can link to interesting and useful information about the Parish and local area published by other people
- The Parish Council can better communicate with those using mobile devices.

An official account on any social media website may only be set up and managed with consent from the Parish Council. Once approved, each account will be set up by the Clerk.

2.2 Facebook

The Parish Council operates a Facebook account for the promotion of activities and events and as a communication and broadcast tool. It is only for matters directly relating to the Parish Council, or local community activities.

Examples of acceptable content are:-

- Consultation documents
- News feed & emergency information
- Event listings, including meetings
- Short debates & quick comments on hot topics and relevant news
- Polls and information gathering
- Useful links

3. Use of the Council's Facebook page

The following outlines the policy on the use of the Council's Facebook page:

- Only authorised staff may use the account to post online and access to the account is strictly limited. The Parish Council's social media accounts are managed and monitored by the Clerk. Two Councillors will also be nominated to monitor the social media account(s) to ensure frequent monitoring in accordance with this policy and to manage the account when the clerk is not working, or on leave.
- Only the Clerk is normally allowed to post to the page. However, this may be delegated to one or more Councillor if the Clerk is to be away, or for urgent matters that may arise between the Clerk's working days.
- Request for something to be posted on the Parish Council's Facebook page, should be directed to the Parish Clerk.
- All information published on the internet must comply with the Parish Council's confidentiality policy and data protection rules.
- Any Councillor or member of the public who becomes aware of social networking activity that would be deemed distasteful should make the Parish Clerk aware as soon as possible
- Only the Clerk has permission to upload photos and videos. The appropriate permissions must be obtained for all imagery.
- Any Councillor or Clerk posting on the Council's Facebook page must ensure they reflect the Council's views and not include any personal comments or bias.

4. Moderation of content

The Parish Council Facebook page is reactively moderated: it is not possible to hide comments pending an approval process. The Council cannot accept responsibility for the content of any comment.

The Council reserves the right to remove comments **received** on Facebook that:

- Contain abusive, obscene, indecent or offensive language, or link to obscene or offensive material.
- Contain swear words or other sorts of profanity.
- Are completely removed from the topic of conversation or are not relevant to the item posted.
- Contain abusive language and/or inappropriate comments directed towards an individual involved in the thread, other organisations or the page administrator.
- Constitute spam, or promote or advertise products, except where it is for an event, publication or similar item that has direct relevance to the subject of discussion. Information about locating and sharing knowledge and expertise is welcomed, but within the specific discussion.
- Are designed to cause nuisance to the page administrator or other users.

For serious and/or persistent breaches of the moderation policy, the Council reserves the right to prevent users from posting further comments.

5. Personal Accounts on Social Media

Councillors and the Clerk are at liberty to set up accounts using any of the tools available, but should ensure they are clearly identified as personal and do not in any way imply that they reflect the Council's view. Councillors should at all times present a professional image and not disclose anything of a confidential nature. Comments of a derogatory, proprietary or libellous nature should not be made and care should be taken to avoid guesswork, exaggeration and colourful language.

6. Purdah

In the six week run up to an election – local, general or European – councils have to very careful not to do or say anything that could be viewed in any way to support any political party or candidate. The period is known as purdah.

The Council will continue to publish important service announcements using social media but will monitor and potentially have to remove responses if they are overtly party political.
