



Social Media Policy

February 2020

1. Purpose of Policy

- 1.1 The policy is to help employees, volunteers and councillors make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn or any other social media site.
- 1.2 This policy outlines the required standards which should be observed when using social media, the circumstances in which we will monitor use of social media and action which will be taken in respect of any breaches of this policy.

2. Scope of Policy

- 2.1 All employees, volunteers and councillors are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, reputation and interests of our council.
- 2.2 Breach of this policy by employees may be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure.
- 2.3 Councillors should also be aware of their responsibilities under the code of conduct.

3. Responsibility for implementation of the policy

- 3.1 The council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
- 3.2 The clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to our work.
- 3.3 All employees, volunteers and councillors should take the time to read and understand it. Any breaches of this policy should be reported to the clerk (or chair).
- 3.4 Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the clerk.

4. Using social media sites on behalf of the council

- 4.1 Only authorised persons (within the scope of their job role) are permitted to post material on a social media website in the council's name and on its behalf.

5. Using social media

- 5.1 We recognise the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about our council and community. We also recognise the importance of our employees, volunteers and members joining in and helping shape local government conversation through interaction in social media.
- 5.2 Members using social media should make it clear that statements they are not representing the views of the Parish Council, unless authorised to do so.
- 5.1 Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the council.
- 5.2 Any employee, volunteer or member who feels that they have been harassed or bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform the clerk or deputy clerk.
- 5.3 Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with the clerk or deputy clerk.
- 5.4 Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.
- 5.5 Before you include a link to a third party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit you to link to it.
- 5.6 When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.
- 5.7 You are personally responsible for content you publish.
- 5.8 Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.
- 5.9 Don't discuss employees without their prior approval.
- 5.10 Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion.
- 5.11 Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact details.

6. Monitoring use of social media websites

- 6.1 Employees should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for council purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken against employees under our disciplinary procedure.
- 6.2 Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and the council.
- 6.3 In particular a serious case of uploading, posting forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will probably amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):
- a) pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);
 - b) a false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;
 - c) material which is offensive, obscene
 - d) criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the council, members, or our employees;
 - e) confidential information about the council or anyone else
 - f) any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for you or the council); or
 - g) material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

Any such action will be addressed under the disciplinary procedure and for employees may result in summary dismissal.

- 6.4 Where evidence of misuse is found we may undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with our disciplinary procedure involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or managers involved in the investigation. If necessary such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.
- 6.5 If you notice any use of social media by other employees or volunteers in breach of this policy please report it to the clerk or deputy clerk.

7. Monitoring and review of this policy

- 7.1 The Policy and Resources Committee shall be responsible for reviewing this policy annually to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

Review: February 2021