



Social Media Policy

Reviewed 4th July 2024 – to be reviewed biannually

The aim of this policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to parish councillors, council staff and the public.

Definition:

“Social media” means websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking on the internet. It includes the Parish Council’s website, email and sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok

Principles:

The principles of this policy apply to parish councillors, council staff and applies to others communicating with the Parish Council. The principles apply to both professional and personal use of social media, interactions with the public on social media and use of the Council’s own social media sites.

Context:

The policy sits alongside relevant existing Council policies which need to be taken into consideration. The current Code of Conduct applies to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. Other relevant policies include Safeguarding, Vexatious, Equality and Data Protection.

Council’s use of social media:

Social media may be used to

- Distribute agendas, post minutes and dates of meetings.
- Advertise events and activities.
- Good news stories linked website or press page.
- Vacancies
- Re-tweet or share information from partner agencies such as Principal Authorities, Police, Library, Health etc.
- Announcing latest information
- Post or Share information from other parish related community groups such as schools, sports clubs, community groups and charities.
- Refer resident queries to the clerk and all other councillors.

Social media may not be used for

- publishing party political material
- religious material
- commercial purposes or to market products

General Code of Practice

When using all social media parish councillors and council staff must be mindful of the information they post in both a personal and council capacity and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative. Online content should be accurate, objective, balanced and informative.

Parish councillors and council staff must not:

- hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms.
- present personal opinions as that of the council
- present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to the council.
- post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the council
- post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks.
- engage in personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications.
- use an individual's name unless given written permission to do so.
- publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission.
- post any information that infringes copyright of others.
- post any information that may be considered libel.
- post online activity that constitutes bullying or harassment.
- bring the council into disrepute, including through content posted in a personal capacity.
- post offensive language relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief.
- conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that is a criminal offence.

Publishing untrue statements about a person which is damaging to their reputation is libel and can result in a court action and fine for damages. This also applies if someone else publishes something libelous on your social media site. A successful libel claim will result in an award of damages against you.

Posting copyright images or text on social media sites is an offence. Breach of copyright will result in an award of damages against you.

Publishing personal data of individuals without permission is a breach of Data Protection legislation is an offence.

Publication of obscene material is a criminal offence and is subject to a custodial sentence.

Councillors' views posted in any role in advance of matters to be debated by the council at a council or committee meeting may constitute Pre-disposition, Pre- determination or Bias and may require the individual to declare an interest at council meetings.

Anyone with concerns about content placed on social media sites that denigrate parish councillors, council staff or residents should report them to the Clerk of the Council.

Misuse of social media content that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.

Council's own Facebook page:

The Council will appoint an administrator who posts and approves all content and ensures the social media Policy is followed. A second administrator will be appointed in the absence of the primary administrator, and this should ideally be the lead of the Governance and Administration group.

Membership of the Parish Council's Facebook page:

- This is restricted to residents and those with a clear and justifiable connection to Wroxham.
- Members must answer the membership questions appropriately and follow the group rules.
- If the administrators feel they have sufficient evidence that a member has used a false name, address or pseudonym they reserve the right to remove that member from the group.

All posts on the council's social media pages must be created or approved by the administrator and must comply with the Code of Practice.

For serious and/or persistent breaches of the moderation policy, we reserve the right to remove members from the group and report incidents to Facebook when appropriate.