

# EAST WITTERING AND BRACKLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL

## Parish Council Social Media Policy

The aim of this Policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to staff and Parish Councillors in the use of online communications, collectively referred to as social media.

Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet. The policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):

- Parish Council Website
- Facebook, Myspace and other social networking sites
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites
- Youtube and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- Bloggs and discussion forums
- Parish Council Emails

### Who does it apply to?

The principles of the Policy apply to Parish Councillors and all Council Staff. It is also intended for guidance for others communicating with the Parish Council.

The policy sits alongside relevant existing policies which need to be taken into consideration.

### Use of Social Media

The use of social media will not replace existing forms of communication. Notices will continue to be published on the Parish Council's notice boards for the purpose of communicating information about the Parish Council to those who do not have access to computers/tablets, smart phones etc. The website and other forms of social media will be used to enhance communication. Therefore existing means of communication should continue with social media being an additional option.

### The Policy

- The Council has appointed the Clerk as moderator. She will be responsible for posting and monitoring of the content ensuring it complies with the Social Media Policy. The moderator will have authority to remove any posts made by third parties from our social media pages which are deemed to be of a defamatory, libel nature. Such posts will also be reported to the Hosts (i.e. Facebook)
- The Council will appoint a nominated "Webmaster" to maintain and update the Parish Council Website
- The social media may be used to
  - Post dates of meetings and give link to the appropriate Agenda
  - Advertise events and activities
  - Good news stories linked website or press page
  - Vacancies
  - Announcing new information.

**Facebook** will be used to support the website information above.

**Emails** will be used to distribute information of council business.

- **Guidance for Councillors using the Council's Social Media Presence**

Individual Parish councillors are responsible for what they post. Councillors are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published e-mail address which is used for council business. Councillors are strongly advised to have separate council and personal email addresses, and adhere to **The Members' Code of Conduct**.

- All social media sites in use should be checked and updated on a regular basis and ensure that the security settings are in place.
- When participating in any online communication;

Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent.

Always disclose your identity and affiliation to the Parish Council. Never make false or misleading statements.

Parish Councillors should not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment. All Parish Councillors need to be mindful of the information they post on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council or bring the Council into disrepute or is contrary to the Council's Code of Conduct or any other Policies.

- Keep the tone of your comments respectful and informative, never condescending or "loud." Use sentence case format, not capital letters, or write in red to emphasis points.
- Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks. Language that may be deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age or religion or belief should not be published on any social media site.
- Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications.
- Never use an individual's name unless you have written permission to do so.
- Permission to publish photographs or videos on social media sites should be sought from the persons or organisations in the video or photograph before being uploaded.
- Respect the privacy of other councillors and residents.
- Do not post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations
- Residents and Councillors should note that not all communication requires a response.
- There will not be immediate responses to communications as they may be discussed by the Parish Council and all responses will be agreed by the Parish Council.
- The Parish Clerk, as the moderator, will be responsible for all final published responses.
- If a matter needs further consideration it may be raised at either the open forum or as a full agenda item for consideration by a quorum of Councillors. Again the poster shall be informed via the page or direct message that this is the case.
- Some communication from residents and other third parties may be required to be discussed at a Parish Council meeting. When this is necessary the item will be placed on the next available agenda. Any response will then be included in the minutes of the meeting.
- The nominated moderator shall remove any negative posts which may contain personal and inflammatory remarks, libellous or defamatory information without further comment or notification.
  - Spell and grammar check everything.

- Correct any errors promptly.
- Councillors or parishioners who have any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should report them to the Clerk of the Council. Misuse of such sites in a manner that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.
- The Policy will be reviewed annually.

Approved by East Wittering and Bracklesham Parish Council at its meeting of 13 October 2016 (minute 16.170).