



BREDE PARISH COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. Purpose of Policy

1.1 Social media provide the Council with the opportunity to communicate to a wide audience promptly on a range of subjects relating to its activities, providing updates, news, information and passing on relevant information from other sources. They also provides an opportunity to communicate with the younger age group, the business community and hopefully the harder to reach groups.

1.2 The Council will make use of social media to quickly distribute information but carefully control its use in order to minimise the risks.

1.3 This policy provides a structured approach to using social media and will ensure that it is effective, lawful and does not compromise Council's information or computer systems/networks.

1.4 Users must ensure they use social media sensibly and responsibly and ensure that its use will not adversely affect the Council or its business, nor be damaging to the Council's reputation and credulity, or otherwise violate any Council's policies.

1.5 The Council will appoint the Clerk to maintain and update the Parish Council Website.

This form of social media may be used to:

- Post minutes and dates of meetings
- Advertise events and activities
- Share good news stories via linked website or press page
- Advertise vacancies for both Councillors and Staff
- Retweet or 'share' information from partners i.e. WDC, ESCC and Police etc.
- Announce new information
- Post or share information from other Parish related groups e.g. schools, sports clubs and community groups
- Emails will be used to distribute information of Council business.

2. Aims

2.1 The aim of this Policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to staff and 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
- Parish Council emails
- Facebook and other social networking sites
- X (formerly twitter) and other micro blogging sites
- YouTube and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- Bloggs and discussion forums

2.2 The principles of the Policy apply to Parish Councillors and the Clerk. It is also intended for guidance for others communicating with the Parish Council. The policy sits alongside relevant existing polices which need to be taken into consideration.

2.3 The use of social media is not to replace existing forms of communication. The Parish Council's monthly meetings, Newsletter and the website will remain the main media for the purpose of communicating information about the Parish Council. 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.

3. Responsibilities

The Clerk

3.1 The Clerk is the designated 'Council' owner of the Council's Social Media channels and will be responsible for establishing and administrating them. Councillors officially appointed by the Council may assist the Parish Clerk to disseminate information. However, all must ensure they follow this policy. No account details may be changed without the permission of the Clerk.

3.2 Parish Council posts or comments on posts should only be made using the established Parish Council social media account.

3.3 The Parish Clerk may initiate posts or comments without prior approval for the purpose of circulating or responding with public domain information, public service notices and details from approved Parish Council minutes, or on instructions from a full council meeting.

4. Guidance for Councillors.

4.1 Aspects of the Members' Code of Conduct apply to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. Online content should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate. What you write on the web is permanent.

4.2 Councillors have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failures to comply with the law may have more serious consequences. There are some additional duties around using their websites for electoral campaigning and extra care needs to be taken when writing on planning matters.

4.3 Councillors should not use their own personal social media accounts when posting or commenting on posts with regard to Parish Council business or anything that may be construed as such.

4.4 Councillors should not use their Council email address for any personal social media activity. Councillors are required to have separate council and personal email addresses.

4.5 Councillors using their own social media accounts or any other form of communication for community or other purposes do so as private individuals and should not use any privileged material gained from their position as a Parish Councillor, or their council email address.

4.6 Councillors wishing to utilise a Parish Council social media account should email the Parish Clerk with the proposed content and posting instructions with a copy to the Chairman.

Once approved by the Chairman, the Parish Clerk will make the post or comment as instructed. (**Note** where possible posts should cross reference to the Parish Council website and provide the appropriate link.)

5. Code of Practice

5.1 Guidance when using social media (including email).

- 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;
- As a Parish Council, there is a professional image to uphold and conduct online impacts this image and we will be responsible and respectful; 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/send by email 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 comments respectful and informative, never condescending or “loud.” Use sentence case format, not capital letters, or write in red to emphasis points. Spell and grammar check everything. Correct any errors promptly.
- 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, regulations, this includes copyright.
- Non-compliance will not be tolerated.

6. Social media and meetings

6.1 The Council encourages Councillors to keep residents informed of the Parish Councils issues and the use of social media can help with this.

6.2 The sites are not monitored 24/7 and we will reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, we will endeavor to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people.

6.3 Sending a message/post via Facebook or other media will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and we will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests. Instead, please contact the Clerk directly. Please do not include personal/private information in your social media posts/messages to the Council.

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