



Earls Colne Parish Council Social Media Policy

The aim of this policy is to provide guidance to parish councillors, council staff and others who engage with the council using online communications, collectively referred to as social media. The policy sits alongside relevant existing policies which need to be taken into consideration. Misuse of social media content that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.

Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet. This 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
- Blogs and discussion forums
- Email

Social media may be used to

- Distribute agendas, post minutes and dates of meetings
- Advertise events and activities
- Promote good news stories linked to a website or press page
- Advertise vacancies
- Re-tweet or share information from partner agencies such as Principal Authorities, Police, Library, Health etc.
- Announce new 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

When using social media (including email) 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 without permission
- Post any information that infringes copyright of others
- Post any information that may be deemed 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 constitutes a criminal offence

Anyone with concerns regarding content placed on social media sites that denigrate parish councillors, council staff or residents should report them to the Clerk. The Clerk will act as moderator of parish council social media output and be responsible for posting and monitoring content to ensure it complies with the Social Media Policy. The moderator will have authority to remove any posts made by third parties from council social media pages which are deemed to be of a defamatory or libellous nature.

Approved by Full Council – 15th July 2020
Review frequency – Annual