

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

This Social Media Policy was adopted by the Council at the Meeting held on: 12<sup>th</sup> July 2017

The aim of this Policy is to make clear the reasons for setting up a Facebook page and set out a Code of Practice to provide general guidance to Whixall Parish Councillors in the use of online communications, collectively referred to as social media. 'Social media' is a 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):

- Facebook and other social networking sites
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites
- YouTube and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- Blogs and discussion forums

The use of social media is not to replace existing forms of communication but to enhance it: Whixall Parish Council has resolved to use Facebook as a platform to share or disseminate information that is useful to the residents of Whixall with an aim to reach a wider audience. However, it will not answer comments via the site but expect communication to be made directly to the Parish Clerk by email, telephone or letter.

The principles of this policy apply to Councillors and the Clerk. It is also intended as guidance for others communicating with the Parish Council. This policy sits alongside existing policies, where relevant, which may need to be taken into consideration.

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.

In the main, 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 any personal social media sites for electoral campaigning and extra care needs to be taken if writing on planning matters.

### **Organisation, arrangements and responsibilities for carrying out the Social Media Policy**

1. The Clerk, upon resolution, will post information. The Clerk will be responsible for posting and ensuring it complies with the Social Media Policy.
2. Social media may be used to:
  - Post dates of meetings
  - Advertise events and activities
  - Good news stories linked website or press page
  - Vacancies
  - Announcing new information.
  - Post or share information from other Parish related community groups/clubs/associations/bodies e.g. Schools, sports clubs, community groups, police, library and health organisations etc.
3. Individual Councillors are responsible for what they post on social media. 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.

## **Code of Practice when using social media.**

1. All social media sites in use (currently Facebook only) should be checked and updated on a regular basis and ensure that the correct security settings are in place.
2. 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.
  - Councillors should not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment. All 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 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.
3. Respect the privacy of other Councillors and residents.
4. Do not post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations or brings the Parish Council into disrepute.
5. Residents and Councillors should note that not all communication requires a response. Councillors should consider whether a communication needs to be brought back to the Parish Council e.g. it covers a matter not covered by an existing Policy/Procedure.
6. There will not be a response to comments made on social media sites but a timely response will be made if contacted directly as stated above.
7. The Clerk and the moderators will be responsible for all final published posts.
8. The nominated moderator or moderators shall remove any negative posts which may contain personal and inflammatory remarks, libelous or defamatory information without further comment or notification.
9. Ensure any errors are corrected promptly.
10. Councillors or parishioners who have any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should report them to the Clerk. Misuse of such sites in a manner that is contrary to this and other Policies could result in action being taken.