

# **GRAPPENHALL AND THELWALL PARISH COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

*(Adopted at the Council Meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2021)*



## **Social Media Policy Policy statement**

- 1.1. This policy is intended to help Councillors and those working for and with the Council to make appropriate decisions about the use of on-line communications, collectively referred to as social media. A term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet.
- 1.2. Social Media includes but is not limited to Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Linked-in, Instagram, Snapchat and Tik Tok.
- 1.3. This policy outlines the standards required by Councillors, employees, and volunteers to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which the Parish Council will monitor the use of social media, and the action they will take in respect of breaches of this policy.
- 1.4. The Website will be the main source of information about the Parish Council and its activities. Networking posts will be largely used to enhance/direct users to the Website or other sources of information /advice.

## **2. The scope of the policy/key principles**

- 2.1. All Councillors and employees are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the Parish Council.
- 2.2. Breach of this policy by employees may be dealt with under Parish Council Disciplinary Procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.
- 2.3. The Policy sits alongside relevant existing Council policies eg Code of Conduct and Standing Orders.
- 2.4. Comments made must be accurate, informative, and considered as they will be recorded and permanent.
- 2.5. Councillors should be mindful of any posts they make on a personal basis, which may bring either them or the Council into disrepute. They should indicate clearly whether or not they are communicating in his/her capacity as a Councillor or individual.
- 2.6. Councillors should not make commitments on behalf of the Council without approval, fail to respect confidentiality, and should be transparent at all times.

## **3. Responsibility for implementation of the policy**

- 3.1. The Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
- 3.2. The Parish Clerk and Assistant Clerk have delegated responsibility for all formal communications between the Parish Council and member of the public. They will be responsible for maintaining the Council website, Facebook page and any other Council social media that may be set up.
- 3.3. The Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to the work of the Parish Council.
- 3.4. All Councillors, employees, volunteers, and members should ensure that they take the time to read and understand the policy. Any breach of this policy in the first instance should be reported to the Clerk. Any subsequent questions regarding the content or application of this policy should also be directed to the Clerk.

## **4. Using social media sites in the name of the Parish Council**

- 4.1. Only the Clerk and Assistant Clerk are permitted to post social media material on behalf of the Parish Council.

## **5. Using social media**

- 5.1. The Parish Council recognises the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about the Council and the wider community. They also recognise the importance of their employees, volunteers and members joining in and helping shape local government conversation and direction through interaction in social media.
- 5.2. Before using social media on any matter which might affect the interests of the council you must have read and understood this policy.

## **6. Rules for use of social media**

Whenever you are permitted to use social media in accordance with this policy, you must adhere to the following general rules:

- 6.1. Do not upload, post, or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.
- 6.2. Any employee, volunteer or member who feels that they have been harassed or bullied or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform the Clerk.
- 6.3. Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with the Clerk.
- 6.4. Do not upload, post, or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.
- 6.5. Before you include a link to a third-party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit you to link to it.
- 6.6. When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.
- 6.7. Be honest and open but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the Parish Council.
- 6.8. You are personally responsible for content you publish onto social media tools.
- 6.9. Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations. Do not discuss employees without their prior approval.
- 6.10. Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g., politics and religion.
- 6.11. Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact details.

## **7. Monitoring use of social media websites**

- 7.1. Employees should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for Parish Council purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken against employees under the terms of the Parish Council Disciplinary Procedure.
- 7.2. Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or can otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and the Parish Council.
- 7.3. In particular a serious case of uploading, posting forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will probably amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):
  - a) pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films, and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature) or any other material that could be regarded as offensive or obscene
  - b) a false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation
  - c) criminal, discriminatory, or derogatory comments that may cause embarrassment to the Parish Council members, or employees
  - d) confidential information about the Parish Council or anyone else
  - e) any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for you or the council) or
  - f) material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

Any such action will be addressed under the Parish Council Disciplinary Procedure and for employees may result in summary dismissal.

- 7.4. Where evidence of misuse is found the Parish Council may undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with Parish Council Disciplinary Procedure, involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation, and any witnesses or managers involved in the investigation. If necessary, such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation. If you notice any use of social media by other employees or volunteers in breach of this policy, please report it to the Clerk.

## **8. Monitoring and review of this policy**

- 8.1. The Clerk shall be responsible for reviewing this policy annually to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.