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SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY OF ALBRIGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

Date : April 2024
Version : v2 - AGREED 4th April 2024

Document Control

Information:

Title :	Social Media Policy	
Document Purpose :	This Policy is intended to help Councillors and Employees to make appropriate decisions about the use of personal and Council social media. Forms of social media include emails, social networking websites, forums, message boards or comments on web articles. Examples of this websites are X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook, Linkedin and other relevant social media websites.	
Date of Original :	1 st February 2024	
Author(s) :	Olivia Neal – Office Administrator	
Date Approved :	Meeting resolution	Review date:
Full Council 4 th April 2024	FCM24/63	

Review / Revision History :

Version :	Review Date :	Next Review Date :	Description of Changes :	Review / Revision by: Name :	Title :

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	4
2. WHO THIS POLICY APPLIES TO.....	4
3. HOW SOCIAL MEDIA WILL BE USED BY THE COUNCIL.....	5
4. REPRESENTING THE COUNCIL.....	5
5. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCEPTABLE USE.....	6
6. DISCLAIMER	7
7. BREACHES OF THIS POLICY.....	8

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This policy aims to support the Parish Council's aim to improve communication with residents (including harder to reach groups) through the effective use of social media. It also aims to set clear guidelines for the expectations of Employees and councillors whilst using Council social media, communicating on behalf of the Council, or as an individual.
- 1.2 This policy and associated guides will help ensure that Employees and Councillors comply with all relevant legislation and Council policies, which are relevant to the use of social media - whether the use is for official council business or personal.
- 1.3 This policy outlines the standards the Council requires Councillors and Employees to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which the Council will monitor the use of social media and the action to be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.
- 1.4 This policy supplements and should be read in conjunction with all other policies and procedures adopted by the Council, such as the Data Protection Policy, Disciplinary Procedure, Members Code of Conduct, and such like.
- 1.5 This policy does not form part of any contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time.

2. WHO THIS POLICY APPLIES TO

- 2.1 All Councillors, Employees and Volunteers are expected to comply with this policy to protect the reputation, privacy, confidentiality and interests of the Council; this includes its services, employees, partners, and community.
- 2.2 Contractors are required to comply with this policy in the same way as Employees and Councillors, and this requirement will form part of contractual agreements.
- 2.3 Councillors' behaviour required by the Members' Code of Conduct shall apply to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication.
- 2.4 Councillors will bear in mind that inappropriate conduct can still attract adverse publicity, even where the code does not apply.
- 2.5 Remarks are easily withdrawn, apologised for, and forgotten when made in person, but posting them on the internet means that they have been published in a way that cannot be contained.
- 2.6 Online content should be objective, balanced, informed, and accurate.
- 2.7 Members must be aware that their profile as a Councillor means the more likely it is they will be seen as acting in an official capacity when posting on social media or other networking platforms.
- 2.8 Councillors and Employees must remember that communications on the internet are permanent and public; even if comments are deleted, they can be documented by the public and its fellow Councillors and Employees using 'screenshots'.
- 2.9 When communicating in a 'private' group it should be ensured that the Council would be content with the statement should it be made public.

3. HOW SOCIAL MEDIA WILL BE USED BY THE COUNCIL

3.1 Social media includes (but is not limited to) social networking sites (such as Facebook and LinkedIn); video and photo sharing websites (such as Flickr, YouTube and Instagram); blogs and microblogs (such as Twitter); 'wiki' sites that can be edited by the public (such as Wikipedia) and forums or discussion boards.

3.2 Councils can use social media in many ways, including:

- Providing information about services
- Gathering customer insight and managing customer relationships
- Promoting cultural and leisure events
- Supporting local communities and developing a neighbourly approach.
- Creating internal communications, learning and development
- Promoting local news stories
- Informing on relevant and helpful topics such as healthcare, child support, benefits and other matters of this nature

3.3 Social media is a useful platform for Councillors who wish to help build a sense of belonging in a neighbourhood, increase resident satisfaction levels and reduce social problems. Councillors are encouraged to engage on social media to connect with residents, encourage conversation and build trust.

3.4 Albrighton Parish Council currently use the following social media sites:

[Albrighton Parish Council's website](#)
[Albrighton Parish Council on Twitter/X](#)
[Albrighton Parish Council on Facebook](#)

3.5 Over time, the Parish Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers.

3.6 Albrighton Parish Council's social media is mainly monitored Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm; however, there may be occasions outside of this where it is necessary for employees or councillors to respond on social media if it is deemed detrimental to the Council or in a manner that could help and assist local residents.

3.7 Albrighton Parish Council aims to reply to all social media messages and comments as soon as possible, however, there may be occasions where a delay is caused due to downtime of an external service or a response is not deemed necessary.

3.8 We may ask those who contact us via social media platforms to email us direct to deal with any issues or complaints.

4. REPRESENTING THE COUNCIL

4.1 Only Council employees are authorised to update the Parish Council social media platforms.

4.2 The Council will appoint a nominated person as moderator – Office Administrator, who will be responsible for posting and monitoring of the content on Council pages and ensure compliance with the Social Media Policy.

4.3 The moderator will have authority to immediately without notice or comment, remove any posts from the Council's social media pages if they are deemed to be

inflammatory or of a defamatory or libellous nature. Such posts will also be reported to the Hosts (i.e., Facebook) and the Clerk for Council records.

4.4 The Council will appoint a nominated 'Webmaster' to maintain and update the Parish Council website, Facebook page, Instagram, and Twitter account. This will be the Office Administrator.

The website and social media platforms may be used to:

- Post notices and minutes of meetings
- Advertise events and activities.
- Post good news stories.
- Link to appropriate websites or press page if those sites meet the Council's expectations of conduct.
- Advertise vacancies.
- Retweet or 'share' information from partners i.e., Police, library, district council etc
- Announce new information appropriate to the Council.
- Post of share information promoting bodies for community benefit such as schools, Scouts, sports clubs, and community groups
- Post other items as the Council see fit.
- Facebook/Twitter/Instagram etc. may be used to support the website and its information as above.

4.5 The creation of social media accounts representing council venues and services is only permitted with agreement from Full Council

4.6 The Council shares and retweets relevant content from local partners and sources, but this does not imply endorsement or that any views expressed are the views of Albrighton Parish Council.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCEPTABLE USE

5.1 Employees and councillors must not allow their interaction on any websites or blogs to damage their working relationships with others.

5.2 Employees and councillors must not make any derogatory, discriminatory, defamatory, or offensive comments about other employees, councillors, the Council or about the people, businesses, and agencies that the Council works with and serves.

5.3 Posts must not contain anyone's personal information other than necessary basic contact details.

5.4 If employees or councillors share posts personally and not in their role as a councillor, they must not act, claim to act or give the impression that they are acting as a representative of the Council. They should not include web links to official Council websites as this may give or reinforce the impression that they are representing the Council.

5.5 All Employees and councillors must ensure that they use Council facilities appropriately. If using a Council provided website, email, or social networking area, any posts made will be viewed as made in an official capacity.

5.6 Employees and Councillors must not use Council facilities for personal or political views.

5.7 Employees and individual Parish Councillors are responsible for what they post. They are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published email address, which is used for Council business. Both Employees and councillors are strongly advised to have separate council and personal email addresses.

5.8 All social media sites in use should be checked on a regular basis to ensure that the security settings are in place.

5.9 When participating in online communication, employees and councillors must:

- Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief, and transparent
- Always disclose their identity and affiliation to the Council.
- Never make false or misleading statements
- Not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment. They must protect the good reputation of the Council.
- Be mindful of the information posted on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council.
- Keep the tone of comments respectful and informative, never condescending or 'loud'. Use sentence case format, not capital letters, do not write in red to emphasise points.
- Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks. Language that may be deemed as offensive relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion, or belief should not be published on any social media site.
- Avoid personal attacks, online fights, and hostile communications.
- Do not post comments that you would not be prepared to make in writing or face to face.
- Never name an individual third party unless you have written permission to do so.
- Seek permission to publish original photographs or video from the persons or organisations in the video or photographs before they are uploaded. You must check that there is parental permission before photos of children are used.
- Respect the privacy of other councillors, employees, and residents.
- Never post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations such as libel and copyright.
- Spell and grammar check everything.

6. DISCLAIMER

6.1 Residents and councillors should be aware that not all communication through social media requires a response, although an acknowledgement will be made if appropriate.

6.2 If a matter that is raised in any form of social media needs further consideration or action made, it may be raised at a Full Council meeting or a relevant committee meeting.

6.3 If complaints or comments are received via social media, the person will be asked to contact the Parish Clerk in an official manner; this can either be via email or in writing to the Parish Council Office. The Parish Clerk will deal with complaints and comments in the appropriate manner.

6.4 Reports of any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites by Councillors should be reported to the Clerk for referral to the Monitoring Officer and/or Council as required.

7. BREACHES OF THIS POLICY

7.1 Serious breaches of this policy by employees may be dealt with under the Employee Disciplinary Procedure.

7.2 The Council may take disciplinary action in respect of unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually orientated or racially offensive comments by the employee.

7.3 Breach of the policy by volunteers will result in the Council no longer using their services and if necessary, appropriate action will be taken.

Note:

- Employees refers to all paid staff and volunteers of Albrighton Parish Council