



Brixworth Parish Council

Social Media Policy

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<i>Documents/corporate/policiesandprocedures</i>	

Brixworth Parish Council

Social Media Policy

The aim of this policy is to set up a Code of Practice which will provide guidance to Parish Councillors' and Staff who engage through online communications, collectively referred to as social media.

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):

- The Parish Council Website
- Facebook, Instagram other social networking sites
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites
- YouTube and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn and other networking sites.
- Blogs and discussion forums
- Email

The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication.

The principles of this policy apply to Parish Councillors' and Staff and applies to others communicating with the Parish Council.

The policy sits alongside relevant existing policies which need to be taken into consideration.

The current Code of Conduct applies to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication.

Individual Parish Councillors and Staff are responsible for what they post both in a council and personal capacity.

In the main, Parish Councillors and Staff have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failure to comply with the law may have more serious consequences.

Social media may be used to

- Distribute agendas.
- Post minutes and dates of meetings.
- Advertise events and activities.
- Good news stories linked website or press page
- Vacancies
- Re-tweet or share information from partner agencies such as other Local Authorities, Police, Library, Health etc.
- Announcing new information
- Post or Share information from other parish related community groups such as schools, sports clubs, community groups and charities

Code of Practice

When using social media (including email) Parish Councillors and 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.

Parish Councillors must make it clear in their text when their comments are a personal point of view. All online content should be accurate, objective, balanced and informative.

Parish Councillors' and 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 of minors without parental 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 the nine equality strands: race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief, gender realignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity.
- Conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence

Publishing untrue statements about a person which is damaging to their reputation is libel and can result in a court action and fine for damages. This also applies if someone else publishes something libellous on your social media site. A successful libel claim will result in an award of damages against you.

Posting copyright images or text on social media sites is an offence. Breach of copyright could result in an award of damages against you.

Publishing personal data of individuals without permission is a breach of Data Protection legislation and is an offence.

Publication of obscene material is a criminal offence and is subject to a custodial sentence.

Parish Councillors' views posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the council at a council or committee meeting may constitute 'pre-disposition', predetermination or bias and may require the individual to formally declare an interest at council meetings

Anyone with concerns regarding content placed on social media sites that denigrate Parish Councillors, Staff or residents should report them direct to the Clerk of the Council. Misuse of social media content that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.

The Media and Communications Committee together with the Parish Clerk will act as moderator for all Parish Council social media output and will be responsible for posting and monitoring content to ensure it complies with the adopted Social Media Policy.

The Media and Communications Committee together with the Parish Clerk will have authority to remove any posts made by third parties from the Parish Council social media pages which are deemed to be of a defamatory or libellous nature.

Review Period

This policy will be reviewed every three years.