



Social Media Policy

1. Introduction

The objective of this policy is to provide for Councillors and staff an overview of Social Media and to outline the Council's position on various aspects of their use. In addition, it includes guidelines on Officer and Councillor responsibilities when using such channels of communication.

2. What is Social Media?

Social Media is a term commonly given to websites and online tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. This interaction may be through computers, mobile phones and new generation technology such as iPads.

Examples of social media websites include:

Social networking	-	e.g. www.facebook.com
Video Sharing	-	e.g. www.youtube.com
Blogs	-	e.g. bbc.co.uk/blogs/childreninneed
Micro –blogging	-	e.g. www.twitter.com
Message Boards	-	e.g. www.bbc.co.uk/dna/mbsn/home
Wikis	-	e.g. www.wikipedia.org
Social Bookmarking	-	e.g. www.delicious.com

3. Council Use of Social Media

Principles

- To publish information about the work of Ackworth Parish Council to a wider audience instantaneously on a range of subjects relating to its activities, providing updates and news information. It also provides an opportunity to communicate with the younger age group, the business community, groups and organisations.
- To avoid entering into online debates or arguments about the Council's work.

Approved Council Social Media

- Parish Council Website
- Parish Council Facebook Page

Users of Council Social Media

- In accordance with the Parish Council's adopted Communications Policy section 5. (See appendix 1.) The Clerk is the Parish Council's nominated Press Officer with the authority to issue official press releases following consultation with the Chairman of the Council and / or Chairman of the relevant Committees. No other member of staff has the authority to issue public statements on behalf of the Council unless instructed to do so by the Clerk.

4. Guidance for Council Officers on the use of the Council Social Media

- Officers should be familiar with the terms of use on third party websites – e.g. Facebook – and adhere to these at all times.
- No information should be published that is not already known to be in the public domain – i.e. available on the Council's website, contained in minutes of meetings, stated in Council publicised policies and procedures etc.
- Information that is published should be factual, fair, thorough and transparent.
- Everyone must be mindful that information published in this way may stay in the public domain indefinitely, without the opportunity for retrieval / deletion.
- Copyright laws must be respected.
- Conversations or reports that are meant to be private or internal must not be published without permission.
- Other organisations should not be referenced without their approval – when referencing, link back to the original source wherever possible.
- Do not publish anything that would be regarded in the workplace as unacceptable.
- Staff must remember that they will be seen as ambassadors for the Council, and should always act in a responsible and socially aware manner.

5. Third Party Social Media and Individual Councillor Usage

Councillors need to be clear when they are acting in a private capacity, and avoid at all times giving any impression that they are acting for and on behalf of Ackworth Parish Council. The Council has adopted a Code of Conduct which is binding on all members. (A copy is available upon request). If a Councillor uses Social Media in his or her official capacity as a Councillor, he/she should always be mindful of the Code, and of the seven Nolan principles applicable to holding public office – selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Councillors must use social media sensibly and responsibly and ensure that its use will not adversely affect the Council or its business, nor be damaging to the Council's reputation and credibility or otherwise violate any Council policies.

Rules of Behaviour

DOs:

- Be aware of and recognise your responsibilities identified in the Social Media Policy.
- Remember that you are personally responsible for the content you publish on any form of social media. Derogatory comments are always wrong.
- Never give out personal details of others such as home address and telephone numbers.
- Set appropriate privacy settings for any blog or networking site
- Watch out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on any blog or page and remove them as soon as possible to avoid any perception that you condone such comments.
- Ensure that you handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the Data Protection Act.

- Use a disclaimer. When using social media for personal purposes, you must not imply you are speaking for the Council. Avoid use of the Council e-mail address, logos or other Council identification. Make it clear that what you say is representative of your personal views only. Where possible you should include a standard disclaimer, such as: "Statements and opinions here are my own and do not necessarily represent the Council's policies or opinions".
- Do not publish any information that you could only have accessed in your position as a Councillor.
- Be careful if making 'political' points, and avoid being specific or personal about individuals.
- Know your obligations: you must comply with other Council policies when using social media. (See appendix 2) For example, you should be careful not to breach Council confidentially and proprietary information policies.

DON'Ts:

- Blog in haste
- Post comments that you would not be prepared to make in writing or in face-to-face contact
- Use Council facilities for personal or political purposes

Councillors are entitled to use any form of social media they wish to but must abide by this policy at all times when doing so.

Sue Templeman

Clerk to Ackworth Parish Council

March 2017

Appendix 1

Communications Policy

Section 5:

The Clerk will clear all press releases or comments to the media regarding policy in consultation with the Chairman of the Council and / or Chairman of the relevant Committee.

Press reports from the Parish Council shall in general be sent from the Clerk or by the reporter's attendance at a meeting.

In addition to the Clerk, the Chairman shall be authorised to speak to the press regarding Parish Council matters. The Chairman of the Village Events Committee will also be authorised to speak in relation to events organised by the committee.

The Clerk is authorised to speak to the press regarding in order to promote and advertise events.

Unless a Councillor had been authorised by the Council to speak to the media or public on a particular issue, Councillors who are asked for comment by the press or public should make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as their personal view.

Appendix 2

Ackworth Parish Council have a number of policies in place.

Please see full list below:

1. Accident / Incident Reporting Policy
2. Communications Policy
3. Child Protection Policy
4. Code of Conduct
5. Complaints Procedure
6. Disciplinary Policy
7. Financial Regulations
8. Grant Applications
9. Health & Safety Policy – see H & S Policy Folder
10. Leave Policy
11. Lone Working Policy
12. Pay Policy
13. Procedure to fill a Vacancy on the PC
14. Protocol for Councillor and Employer Relations
15. Rules for Effective Management of Recording at Parish Council Meetings
16. Social Media Policy
17. Smoke Free Policy
18. Standing Orders
19. Terms of Reference for Committees and Working Groups
20. Winter Weather Policy

Copies of policies available on request from the Council office.

