

Wheatley Parish Council Social Media Policy

adopted 05.02.18, reviewed 04.10.2021

Purpose of this policy

The aim of this policy is to establish a set of guidelines for Wheatley Parish Councillors and employees who engage in the use of social media. Although we are, as individuals all bound by the same legal duties, the consequences for Wheatley Parish Council may be far greater.

What is social media?

Social media is defined as websites and applications e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, blogging, vlogging, that enables users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. This policy covers all forms of social media.

Why should Wheatley Parish Council engage in Social Media?

Used effectively social media can improve communication with residents and the wider population and increase awareness of issues and projects that the parish council are involved with.

Under the Transparency Code, we are expected to use and maintain a website in order to share and display information to our parishioners. Following consultation with the community, the council has reviewed its Social Media presence and will have their own Social Media accounts.

Accounts will be managed and monitored by the Clerk/Assistant Clerk with assistance from the Chairman and Vice Chairman.

Social media is not the only communication tool used by the council. It still uses and actively promotes the use of noticeboards, newsletters, and face to face communication.

What we may use social media for:

- Distribute parish council agendas, minutes, and dates of meetings
- Advertise parish council events and activities
- Announce new information
- Promote links with village/community organisations
- Advertise parish council vacancies
- Share information and links from local, district, county, or national agencies
- Post or share information from neighbouring parishes
- Provide contact for parish related issues
- Sharing images of Wheatley and the surrounding area

Roles of councillors and employees

When using social media both parish councillors and parish employees must be mindful of the information they post. The views of individual parish councillors posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the parish council at a council meeting, constitute pre-disposition, pre-determination or bias and may require the individual to declare an interest at the meeting. It must be clear that any individual's comments are their own and not those of the parish council.

Employees must refrain from posting about their employers, including forthcoming parish council business, contractors, business or other sensitive information.

No confidential information about the council, its councillors or employees should be shared on social media.

Any content should be accurate, objective, balanced and informative, complying with the parish council's own Code of Conduct.

Anyone who has concerns regarding social media content should initially report this to the Parish Clerk or their absence or unavailability the Chair of Parish Council.

Councillors and employees must not:

- Hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms
- Present personal opinions as that of the parish council
- Present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to the parish council
- Post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the parish council
- Publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
- Publish personal information without permission that breaches Data Protection legislation.
- Post any information that infringes copyright
- Post any information that may be deemed libelous
- Use council equipment/accounts excessively or engage in any communication that may be construed as bullying or harassment

The misuse of social media content or equipment that is contrary to this policy could result in disciplinary or criminal action being taken.

As an employer, the council reserves the right to monitor the use of the internet by employees from time to time and to retain records of information identified during a search.

The Clerk and Assistant Clerk have the responsibility of maintaining and updating the parish website.

Legislation

There are numerous legal aspects relating to individuals and the council everyone involved should consider the following:

- Data Protection Act 1998/General Data Protection Regulations 2018
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- Human Rights Act 1998 – Article 8
- Defamation Act 2013
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988
- Transparency Code 2015