

FLEGGBURGH PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Council Social Media Policy

The aim of this policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to parish councillors, council staff and others who engage with the council using online communications, collectively referred to as social media. Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet.

Social media provide an opportunity to participate in interactive discussion and share information to the wider community.

This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):

- Parish Council Website
- Facebook, Instagram and other social networking sites
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites
- Youtube and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- 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 council staff and also applies to others communicating with the Parish Council.

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

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

Individual parish councillors and council staff are responsible for what they post in a council and personal capacity.

In the main, councillors and council 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
- News stories relevant to parishioners
- Vacancies
- Share information from partner agencies such as Principal Authorities, Police, Library, Health etc.
- Announce new information
- Post or Share information from other parish related community groups such as schools, sports clubs, community groups and charities
- Refer resident queries to the clerk

Code of Practice

When using social media (including email) parish councillors and council staff must be mindful of the information they post and share in both a personal and council capacity and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative.

Online content should be accurate, objective, balanced and informative. Parish councillors and council 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 does not respect the council and other members
- post content that attacks the democratic decisions of the council (this policy does not preclude reversing a decision of council as given in Standing Orders, 7 (a) (b))
- 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 or discriminative language relating protected characteristics such as race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief
- conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence
- post recordings of Parish Council meetings, whether audio or video, on Youtube or any other social media platform without former permission granted from the Council

Publishing untrue statements about a person which is damaging to their reputation is libel and can result in legal action being taken.

This also applies if someone else publishes something libellous on your social media site. A successful libel claim could 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 could result in a custodial sentence.

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, Pre-determination or Bias and may require the individual to declare an interest at council meetings.

Anyone with concerns regarding content placed on social media sites that denigrate parish councillors, council staff or residents should report them to the Clerk of the Council or to

the Monitoring Officer at Great Yarmouth Borough Council (see complaints procedure).

Misuse of social media content that is contrary to this and other policies could result in disciplinary action being taken.

The Council will appoint a nominated person(s) of the parish council social media output and be responsible for posting and monitoring content to ensure it complies with the Social Media Policy, this will always include the Clerk as moderator and optionally one Councillor to be able to post and monitor.

The Clerk will have authority to remove any posts made by third parties from council social media pages which are deemed to be of a defamatory or libellous nature.

Adopted: December 10th 2020 Reviewed: September 2023