

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

**Adopted 8<sup>th</sup> January 2018 re-adopted 06.02.2023**

### **1. Policy Statement**

1.1. This Policy is intended to help employees including clerks, RFOs, Executive Officers, part-time, fixed-term and casual employees (collectively referred to as employees in this policy), councillors and volunteers make appropriate decisions about the use of all forms of social media e.g. blogs, social networking websites, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

1.2. This Policy outlines the standards we require employees, Councillors and volunteers to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which we will monitor your use of social media and the action we will take in respect of breaches of this policy.

### **2. The Scope of the Policy**

2.1. All employees, volunteers and councillors are expected to comply with this Policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality and interests of the Council.

2.2. Breach of this Policy by employees may be dealt with under Council's Disciplinary Procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.

### **3. Responsibility for Implementation of the Policy**

3.1. The Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this Policy.

3.2. The Clerk is responsible day-to-day for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this Policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to Council's work.

3.3. All employees, councillors and volunteers should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any breach of this Policy should be reported to the Clerk and/or the Chairman of the Council as appropriate.

3.4. Questions regarding the content or application of this Policy should be directed to the Clerk.

### **4. Using Social Media Sites in Council's Name**

4.1. Only the Clerk and Administrative Assistant are permitted to post material on a social media website in the Council's name and on its behalf.

## **5. Using Social Media Sites in General, including personal social media pages**

5.1. We recognise the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about this Council and community. We also recognise the importance of Council employees, councillors and volunteers joining in and helping shape local government conversation and direction through interaction on social media e.g., their own social media pages.

5.2. Before using social media on any matter which might affect the interests of the Council, those referred to in Para 1.1 must:

a) have read and understood this Policy and any related policies, and

b) employees, councillors and volunteers must have gained prior written or electronic approval to do so from the Clerk/Chairman.

## **6. Rules for use of Social Media**

Whenever you are permitted to use social media in accordance with this Policy, you must adhere to the following general rules:

6.1. Do not upload, post or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.

6.2. Any employee, volunteer or member who feels that they have been harassed or bullied or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform the Clerk and/or the Chairman of the Council.

6.3. Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal, private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with the Clerk and/or the Chairman of the Council.

6.4. Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.

6.5. Before you include a link to a third party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit you to link to it.

6.6. When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.

6.7. Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the Council.

6.8. Don't pre-empt items for Council's decision or resolution, nor comment adversely once such decisions or resolutions have been made.

6.9. You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools.

6.10. Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.

6.11. Don't discuss employees without their prior approval.

6.12. Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion.

6.13. Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact details.

## **7. Monitoring use of Social Media Websites**

7.1. Employees and Councillors should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for council purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken against employees under Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

7.2. Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and us.

7.3. In particular a serious case of uploading, posting forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will probably amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):

- a) pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);
- b) a false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;
- c) material which is offensive, obscene;
- d) criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the Council, its councillors, or Council's employees;
- e) confidential information about the Council or anyone else ;
- f) any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for you or the Council); or
- g) material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

Any such action will be addressed under Council's Code of Conduct and/or Disciplinary Procedure and for employees may result in summary dismissal.

7.4. Where evidence of misuse is found we may undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct and/or Disciplinary Procedure, involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or managers involved in the investigation. If necessary such information may be handed to the Police in connection with a criminal investigation.

7.5. If you notice any use of social media by other employees, councillors or volunteers in breach of this policy please report it to the Clerk and/or the Chairman of the Council.

## **8. Monitoring and Review of this Policy**

8.1. The Council shall be responsible for reviewing this Policy as appropriate to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

**Terms and Conditions of Use of Social Media** - to be added to Council's social media page(s):

i) The Council reserves the Right to remove without notice any posts which contain the following:

- ☐ Content or language that is defamatory, abusive, harassing, libellous, obscene, profane, or offensive to gender, faith, age, disability, race or sexual orientation – or unlawful in any way,
- ☐ Content deemed confidential by the Council
- ☐ Content that shares anyone's personal information without permission
- ☐ Content that infringes the copyright or intellectual property or any company or individual
- ☐ Photographs of children, unless written authorisation has been granted and evidenced prior to posting
- ☐ Content that is party political in nature
- ☐ Content that promotes unlawful activity

ii) Please direct any official complaints or feedback to the Council by email at [clerk@wellowparish.org.uk](mailto:clerk@wellowparish.org.uk), or by phone on 01794 323275

iii) Do not use the Council's social media page(s) to report a crime or emergency.

iv) The Council's social media page(s) is/are not monitored at all times, however where appropriate we aim to respond to messages and/or comments within 48 hours, excepting weekends.

v) Do not use the Council's social media page(s) to sell, advertise or promote commercial services.

vi) The Council is not responsible for the accuracy of any content posted by any user. Opinions shared and expressed by users of the Council's social media page(s) do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Council.

vii) All comments on Council's social media page(s) will automatically become the property of the Council.

viii) You may share any information posted on the Council's social media page(s), however you must state the original source.

**ix) THE COUNCIL RESERVES THE RIGHT TO BLOCK ANYONE FROM USING THE COUNCIL'S SOCIAL MEDIA PAGE(S) AFTER A WARNING WITHOUT FURTHER DISCUSSION OR EXPLANATION.**

**Review Date: January 2025**

*Parish Policies/SocialMediaPolicy*

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