

# **POOL-IN-WHARFEDALE PARISH COUNCIL**

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

(Approved Council Meeting 10 October 2022)

### **Aims:**

The aim of this Policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to Pool-in-Wharfedale Parish Councillors in the use of online communications, collectively referred to as social media.

Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet. The policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):

- Parish Council Website
- Parish Council Emails
- Facebook, Myspace and other social networking sites
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites
- YouTube and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- Bloggs and discussion forums

The principles of the Policy apply to Parish Councillors and the Clerk. It is also intended for guidance for others communicating with the Parish Council.

The use of social media is not to replace existing forms of communication. The Parish Council's website will remain the main media for the purpose of communicating information about the Parish Council. Other forms of social media will be used to enhance communication. Therefore, existing means of communication should continue with social media being an additional option.

Aspects of the Members' Code of Conduct apply to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. Online content should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate.

In the main, Councillors have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failures to comply with the law may have more serious consequences. There are some additional duties around using their websites for electoral campaigning and extra care needs to be taken when writing on planning matters.

### **Guidelines**

Councillors should not use their own personal social media accounts when posting or commenting on posts with regard to Parish Council business or anything that may-be construed as such.

Councillors using their own social media accounts or any other form of communication for community or other purposes do so as private individuals and should not use any privileged material gained from their position as a Parish Councillor.

The Parish Clerk will be responsible for establishing and administrating Parish Council social media accounts. Parish Council posts or comments on posts should only be made using the established Parish Council social media account.

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Councillors wishing to utilise a Parish Council social media account should email the Parish Clerk with the proposed content and posting instructions with a copy to the Chairman. **Note** where possible posts should cross reference to the Parish Council website and provide the appropriate link. Once approved by the Chairman, the Parish Clerk will make the post or comment as instructed.

The Parish Clerk may initiate posts or comments without prior approval for the purpose of circulating or responding with public domain information, public service notices and details from approved Parish Council minutes or on instructions from a full council meeting.

The Parish Council Website will be maintained by the Clerk and be updated on a regular basis  
This form of social media may be used to

- Post minutes and dates of meetings
- Advertise events and activities
- Good news stories linked website or press page
- Vacancies for both Councillors and Staff
- Retweeting or 'share' information from partners i.e., Police, Library and Health etc.
- Announcing new information.
- Post or share information from other Parish related community groups e.g., schools, sports clubs and community groups

Emails will be used to distribute information of council business.

Councillors are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published e-mail address which is used for council business. Councillors should have separate council and personal email addresses.

### **Code of Practice**

Guidance when using social media (including email).

- All social media sites in use should be checked and updated on a regular basis and ensure that the security settings are in place.
- When participating in any online communication.
  - As a Parish Council, we have a professional image to uphold and how we conduct ourselves online impacts this image
  - Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent.
  - Always disclose your identity and affiliation to the Parish Council. Never make false or misleading statements.
  - Parish Councillors should not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment. All Parish Councillors need to be mindful of the information they post on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council or bring the Council into disrepute or is contrary to the Council's Code of Conduct or any other Policies.
  - Keep the tone of your comments respectful and informative, never condescending or "loud." Use sentence case format, not capital letters, or write in red to emphasis points. Spell and grammar check everything. Correct any errors promptly.
  - Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks. Language that may be deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age or religion or belief should not be published on any social media site.
  - Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications.

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- Never use an individual's name unless you have written permission to do so.
  - Permission to publish photographs or videos on social media sites should be sought from the persons or organisations in the video or photograph before being uploaded.
  - Respect the privacy of other councillors and residents.
  - Do not post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations, see below libel and copyright.
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- Residents and Councillors should note that not all communication requires a response.
    - There will not be immediate responses to communications as they may be discussed by the Parish Council and responses may be agreed by either the full Parish Council or by the Chairman/Clerk if not contentious.
    - The Parish Clerk will be responsible for all final published responses having referred to the Chairman where necessary.
    - If a matter needs further consideration it may be raised as a full agenda item for discussion at the next appropriate meeting. Again the poster shall be informed via the page or direct message that this is the case.
    - If the Clerk feels unable to answer a post e.g., one of a contentious nature, this shall be referred to the Chairman. The poster will be informed by way of response to this fact and also be invited to correspond with them directly.
    - Some communications from residents and other third parties may be required to be discussed at a Parish Council meeting. When this is necessary the item will be placed on the next available agenda. Any response will then be included in the minutes of the meeting.

### **Non-compliance may result in a ban.**

Councillors or parishioners who have any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should report them to the Clerk of the Council. Misuse of such sites in a manner that is contrary to this, and other policies could result in action being taken.

Pool-in-Wharfedale Parish Council are not responsible for the accuracy of content posted by any subscriber in any forum, opinions expressed on comments on the Parish Councils social media forums do not necessarily represent those of the Parish Council.

All comments once posted become the property of the Parish Council and we reserve the right to reproduce, distribute, publish, display or edit. Derivative work can also be created from such postings or content and used for any purpose in any form and on any other media.

The presence of any advertisement on Facebook is not an endorsement of the authenticity or quality of any goods, services or website and the Parish Council will not be held responsible for any claims in that respect.

We will not engage in/with and discourage posts or comments on, issues of a political nature.

By choosing to comment and/or utilize any Parish Council social media users are deemed to agree to this policy.

### **Review of policy**

The Policy will be reviewed at least every three years or earlier should legislation or practice require.