

MARTIN AND MARTIN DALES PARISH COUNCIL

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY STATEMENT

1. Aim of this Policy

This policy is intended to ensure the Parish Council and its employees make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as emails, blogs, social networking websites, podcasts, forums, message boards or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other relevant social media websites.

2. How and When to use Social Media

The Council will encourage the use of social media for the purposes of: -

Providing and exchanging information about services

Supporting local democracy

Gathering parishioner views

Promoting cultural events or tourism for the Parish

Supporting community cohesion, neighborliness and resilience

Creating internal communications, learning and development

This policy outlines the standards the Council requires councillors and employees to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which the Council will monitor the use of social media and the action to be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.

This policy supplements and should be read in conjunction with all other policies and procedures adopted by the Council including Standing Orders Data Protection Policy and the Code of Conduct.

3. Who is covered by this policy?

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels within the Council, including all elected and co-opted councillors, the Clerk to the Council and all other employees and volunteers.

4. The scope of this policy

The Council has a corporate presence on the web and the use of email

Over time the Parish Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers.

When these changes occur, this Social Media Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

The Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. We may ask those who contact us for their preferred channel of communication when we deal with them.

All members and employees are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the reputation, privacy, confidentiality and interests of the Council, its services, employees, partners and community.

5. Rules for using social media

Employees and councillors must not allow their interaction on any websites or blogs to damage their working relationships with others. They must not make any derogatory, discriminatory, defamatory or offensive comments about other employees, councillors, the Council or about the people, businesses and agencies that the Council works with and serves.

Posts must not contain anyone's personal information without authority to use this information.

If employees or councillors blog, message or tweet personally and not in their role as a councillor, they must not act, claim to act or give the impression that they are acting as a representative of the Council. They should not include web links to official Council websites as this may give or reinforce the impression that they are representing the Council.

All employees and councillors must ensure that they use Council facilities appropriately. If using a Council-provided website, blog site or social networking area, any posts made will be viewed as made in an official capacity.

Do not use Council facilities for personal or political blogs.

The Council will appoint a nominated person as administrator for any social media site used by the Parish Council who will be responsible for the monitoring of the content on Council pages and ensure compliance with the Social Media Policy. The administrator will have authority to immediately without notice or comment, remove any posts from the Council's social media pages if they are deemed to be inflammatory or of a defamatory or libelous nature. Such posts will also be reported to the Clerk for Council records.

The Administrator for the Lincolnshire County Council Parishes on Line is the Clerk to the Council and all other sites including Facebook and the Parish Council website is administered by a councillor agreed through resolution in a full Council meeting.

Site content will be agreed through council resolution. The administrator will input the content of the site which must be in line with this policy.

Authority to add content to social media which appears not to be included in this policy should be sort via the Chair, the Clerk and at least 2 other Councillors.

6. The Parish website website(s) may be used to: -

Post notices and minutes of meetings

Advertise events and activities

Post good news stories

Link to appropriate websites or press page if those sites meet the Council's expectations of conduct

Advertise vacancies

Retweet or 'share' information from partners i.e., Police, library, district council etc.

Announce new information appropriate to the Council.

Post or share information promoting bodies for community benefit such as schools, sports clubs and community groups.

Post other items as the Council see fit.

Employees and individual parish councillors are responsible for what they post. They are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published e-mail address which is used for Council business.

Employees and councillors are strongly advised to have separate council and personal email addresses.

All social media sites in use should be checked on a regular basis to ensure that the security settings are in place.

7. When participating in online communication, staff and councillors must: -

Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent

Always disclose their identity and affiliation to the Council

Never make false or misleading statements

Not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to themselves or to others.

Be mindful of the information posted on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council.

Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks.

Language that may be deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief should not be published on any social media site.

Avoid personal attacks and hostile communication.

Never name an individual third party unless you have written permission to do so.

Seek permission to publish original photographs or video from the persons or organisations in the video or photographs before they are uploaded.

You must check that there is parental permission before photos of children are used.

Respect the privacy of other councillors, employees and parishioners.

Never post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations such as libel and copyright.

8. When are Responses on Social Media Necessary?

Parishioners and councillors should be aware that not all communication through social media requires a response, although an acknowledgement should be made if appropriate.

If a matter that is raised in any form of social media needs further consideration by the Council it may be raised at either the open forum or as full agenda item for consideration by a quorum of councillors. Again the 'poster' shall be informed via the page or direct message that this is the case and invited to contact the Clerk direct. Any response agreed by the Council will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Reports of any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should be reported to the Clerk for referral to the administrator and/or Council as required.

9. Review Date

This policy will be reviewed 11th May 2021