

CORSCOMBE, HALSTOCK AND DISTRICT PARISH COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Introduction

The objective of this policy is to provide Councillors and staff an overview of Social Media and outline the Council's position on various aspects of their use. In addition, it includes guidelines on Officer and Councillor responsibilities when using such channels of communication.

The use of social media will not replace existing forms of communication. The website and 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.

Definition of Social Media

Social media is a term for websites based on user participation and user-generated content. They include social networking sites and other sites that are centred on user interaction including websites and emails.

Social media has the following characteristics:

- Covers a wide variety of formats, including text, video, photographs, audio
- Allows messages to flow between many different types of devices; PCs, phones and tablets (e.g. iPad)
- Involves different levels of engagement by participants who can create, comment or just view information
- Speeds and broadens the flow of information
- Provides one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communications
- Let's communication take place in real time or intermittently

Examples of popular social media tools include: Twitter, Facebook, Wikipedia, You Tube, Pinterest, Snip. It, Linked In and Google Plus. Groupings of interest are a natural feature of the development of such systems with people with similar interests being attracted to share information.

The policy

The aim of this Policy is to ensure:

- Engagement with individuals and communities and successful promotion of Council- based services through the use of social media
- A consistent approach is adopted and maintained in the use of social media
- That Council information remains secure and is not compromised through the use of social media
- That users operate within existing policies, guidelines and relevant legislation
- That the Council's reputation is upheld and improved rather than adversely affected
- That communication by use of social media is effective, timely, appropriate, useful, engages with a wider audience and utilises cross-promotion of other Council communication tools (e.g., website, quarterly magazine, linking Facebook to Twitter account etc)

Social media activity isn't something that stands alone, to be effective it needs to integrate as part of the general communications mix. Any planned campaigns, promotions and activities can be plugged in to social media platforms to increase reach and exposure. Refer to the Council's Communications Policy.

The Council will appoint a nominated member of staff/ Councillor (Parish Clerk). They will be responsible for posting and monitoring of the content ensuring it complies with the Social Media Policy.

The Council will appoint a nominated "Webmaster" (Parish Clerk) to maintain and update the Parish Council Website.

The Council will make use of approved social media tools to quickly disseminate information but carefully control its use in order to minimise the risks. In the first instance this will include Facebook, website, and emails.

The 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
- 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/clubs/associations/ bodies e.g. Schools, sports clubs and community groups
- Refer resident queries to the clerk and all other councillors

Facebook will be used to support the website information above. Emails will be used to distribute information of council business.

Guidance for Councillors using the Council's Social Media Presence

Individual Parish councillors are responsible for what they post. Councillors are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published e-mail address which is used for council business. Councillors are strongly advised to have separate council and personal email addresses and adhere to **The Members' Code of Conduct**.

1. All social media sites in use should be checked and updated on a regular basis and ensure that the security settings are in place.
2. When participating in any online communication;
 - a. Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief, and transparent.
 - b. Always disclose your identity and affiliation to the Parish Council. Never make false or misleading statements.
 - c. 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.
 - d. 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.
 - e. 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.
 - f. Avoid personal attacks, online fights, and hostile communications.
 - g. Never use an individual's name unless you have written permission to do so.
 - h. 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.
3. Respect the privacy of other councillors and residents.
4. Do not post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations.

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.

At this stage it is not intended to use any other forms of social media for official use by Corscombe, Halstock and District Parish Council. However, this could be open to review in the future.

Councillors are entitled to use any form of social media they wish to but must abide by this policy at all times when so doing.

The Policy will be reviewed annually.