



USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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Spaldington Parish Council will hereinto be known in this policy as *'the Council'*

1. INTRODUCTION

- i. The Council promotes the use of internet and social media to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council's functions. However, these facilities must be used responsibly and lawfully.
- ii. The aim of this policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide rules to parish councillors and council staff and others who engage with the council using online communications, collectively referred to as social media.
- iii. This policy sits in conjunction with Council's 'Use of Email and Digital Media Policy'.

2. WHAT THIS POLICY DEFINES AS SOCIAL MEDIA

- i. Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet.
- ii. This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):
 - Parish Council Website
 - 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
 - Email

3. PRINCIPLES OF THE POLICY

- i. The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication.
- ii. The principles of this policy apply to parish councillors and council staff and also applies to others communicating with the Parish Council.



- iii. The current Code of Conduct applies to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication.
- iv. Individual parish councillors and council staff are responsible for what they post in a council and personal capacity.

4. THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- i. Social media may be used to (but with caution):
 - Distribute agendas, post minutes and dates of meetings
 - Advertise events and activities
 - News stories relevant to parishioners
 - Vacancies
 - Re-tweet or share information from partner agencies such as Principal Authorities, Police, Library, Health Authority
 - 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 and all other councillors

5. CODE OF PRACTICE - USING SOCIAL MEDIA

- i. When using social media (including email) parish councillors and council staff must be mindful of the information they post in both a personal and council capacity and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative.
- ii. Online content should be accurate, objective, balanced and informative.
- iii. 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 might cause embarrassment to the council
 - post content that attacks the democratic decisions of the council (this policy does not preclude reversing a decision of council)



- 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 language relating to 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

6. CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE TO ADHERE TO THE POLICY

- i. 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.
- ii. 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.
- iii. Posting copyright images or text on social media sites is an offence. Breach of copyright could result in an award of damages against you.
- iv. Publishing personal data of individuals without permission is a breach of Data Protection legislation and is an offence.
- v. Publication of obscene material is a criminal offence and could result in a custodial sentence.