

St Helen Without Parish Council

Social Media Policy

The aim of this policy is to set out how St Helen Without Parish Council plans to use social media. The Code of Practice provides detail to those using the Council's social media accounts. Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet.

This policy covers the following forms of social media:

- Parish Council Facebook page
- if required, other social networking sites

Email communication and the Parish Council website are not included in this Policy.

The Council will maintain a Facebook account to inform the public about Parish Council business and activity. Social media will augment the Parish Council website and other methods of communication already in use by the Parish Council.

Individual Parish Councillors and staff are responsible for what they post in a council or personal capacity.

The Facebook or other social networking sites accounts may be used to:

- Refer to the Parish Council website
- Share agendas, post minutes and dates of Council meetings
- Advertise events and activities
- Share good news stories or highlight action taken by the council following correspondence from the public
- Advertise vacancies
- Share information from partner agencies such as Principal Authorities, Police, Library, Health etc.
- Announce new information or policies
- Post or share information from other parish related community groups such as schools, sports clubs, and charities
- Refer resident queries to the Clerk and all other Councillors

The Council will not conduct casework or deal with complaints via social media. These should be emailed to the Clerk.

Social media channels are not monitored constantly and the Council cannot guarantee that enquires via social media will receive a prompt response. If an enquiry or comment is urgent, the Council recommends contacting the Clerk directly using the details on the Council's website.

The Parish Council reserves the right to moderate comments that are posted to its social media feeds, especially if they breach the Social Media Code of Practice outlined below. The Council makes no commitment to respond to individuals and repeat offenders may be blocked from using the Facebook page indefinitely. The Council will not edit any comments made.

Social Media Code of Practice

This Code of Practice outlines expected standards of behaviour from those responsible for updating information when using the Parish Council's official social media feeds. It also sets an expectation for others who engage with the Council via those social media feeds.

When using social media, those making posts must be mindful of the information they post and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative.

Every effort should be made to ensure online content published on the Council's official social media channels should be accurate and informative.

When using the Parish Council's official social media channels, posts must not:

- hide the poster's identity using false names or pseudonyms
- present personal opinions as that of the council
- post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the council
- post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks
- use an individual's name unless given written permission to do so
- publish photographs or videos of minors without written parent/guardian permission
- post any information that infringes copyright of others
- post any information that may be deemed libel
- post online in a way that constitutes bullying or harassment
- bring the Council into disrepute
- 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

Parish Council social media followers should adhere to certain good practices and conventions of polite and constructive discourse if responding to posts on its social media feeds. Therefore, the Council will not publish, or will remove, comments that:

- contain abusive, obscene, indecent or offensive language
- contain swear words or other sorts of profanity
- contain abusive language towards an individual involved in the thread, other organisations or the page administrator
- are completely removed from the topic of conversation or non-relevant to the item posted on the wall
- constitute spam or promote or advertise products except where it is for an event, publication or similar item that has direct relevance to the subject of discussion. Information about locating and sharing knowledge and expertise is welcomed, but within the specific discussion provided
- are designed to cause nuisance to the page administrator or other users

The Council will appoint a nominated individual, or individuals, to maintain social media accounts and to be responsible for posting and monitoring content to ensure it complies with the Social Media Policy.

October 2020