

Potterne Parish Council Social Media Policy

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Author & responsible officer:	Clerk to Potterne Parish Council		
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The aim of this policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to parish councillors, council staff and others who engage with the council using online communications, collectively referred to as social media. Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet.

This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):

- Parish Council Website
- Facebook
- Email
- X (formally known as Twitter)
- Instagram

The principles of this policy apply to parish councillors and council staff, and also applies to others communicating with the Parish Council.

The current parish council Code of Conduct applies to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication.

Individual parish councillors and council staff are responsible for what they post in a council and personal capacity.

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.

Social media may be used to:

- Distribute agendas, post minutes and dates of meetings
- Advertise local events and activities
- News stories linked to the website
- Parish Council Vacancies
- Re-share information from partner agencies such as Principal Authorities, Police, Library, Health etc.
- Announcing urgent information (road closures, flooding, etc)
- 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

Code of Practice

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.

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 is contrary to the democratic decisions of the 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

Councillors' views posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the council at a council or committee meeting may constitute pre-disposition, predetermination or bias and may require the individual to declare an interest at council meetings.

When making comments/post on social media, councillor's views/comments must be marked correctly to state that these are their own 'personal' views and not views held by the Parish Council.

When participating in online communication the parish council will generally allow posts on its social media pages from members of the public that:

- Are responsible and respectful
 - Respect the privacy of other councillors, staff and residents
 - Are objective, balanced, informative and accurate
- Posts will be deleted, and the holder of an account banned, without notice, if a comment or a post:
- Gives out personal data of others, including home address and telephone number
 - Mentions an individual's name or posts information about an individual unless deemed reasonable (publishing personal data of individuals without permission is a breach of Data Protection legislation)
 - Makes intentionally false and misleading statements
 - Includes potentially inflammatory, defamatory, libellous or offensive remarks
 - Makes derogatory, defamatory, discriminatory or offensive comments about any person including council staff, councillors, the council or about the people, businesses and agencies the council works with and serves, or posts online activity that constitutes as bullying or harassment.
 - Uses language that may be deemed offensive, in particular relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief
 - Engages in personal attacks, online fights, and/or hostile communications
 - Includes the publication of photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
 - Includes any information that may be deemed libel (publishing untrue statements about a person that is damaging to their reputation is libel and can result in court action)

- Includes obscene materials (publications of this type of material is a criminal offence)
- Conducts any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence

Anyone with concerns regarding content placed on social media sites that denigrate parish councillors, council staff or residents should report them to the Clerk of the Council @ clerk@potterne-pc.gov.uk.

Misuse of social media content that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.