



## COLSTERWORTH AND DISTRICT PARISH COUNCIL

### SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

#### WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

'Social media' is the term commonly given to websites and online tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way = by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. This interaction may be through computers, mobile phones other technology.

Examples of social media websites include:

- Facebook
- Youtube
- Instagram
- Twitter

The Council has a website and uses email to communicate. The Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time the 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 Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

#### COUNCIL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The Council is continually looking at ways to improve its working and the use of social media and electronic communications is a major factor in delivering improvement. Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act in all their work on behalf of the Council.

Parish Councillors and staff must ensure that all forms of communication (including Social Media) meet the following criteria and in particular

- Be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- Not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright;
- Not contain any personal information.
- If it is official Council business it will be moderated by the Clerk to the Council;
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

#### PRINCIPLES

- To publish information about the work of Colsterworth and District Parish Council to a wider audience.
- To avoid entering into online debates or arguments about the Council's work.
- Social Media must NOT be used in the recruitment process for employees or new councillors - other than for the sole purpose of placing vacancy advertisements - as this could lead to potential discrimination and privacy actions, as well as breach of data protection issues.

#### APPROVED COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA

Colsterworth Parish Council Website (Colsterworth.com)

- Where necessary, we may direct those contacting us to our website to see the required information, or we may forward their question to one of our Councillors for consideration and

response. We may not respond to every comment we receive particularly if we are experiencing a heavy workload.

- The Council may, at its discretion, allow and enable approved local groups to have and maintain a presence on its website for the purpose of presenting information about the group's activities. The local group would be responsible for maintaining the content and ensuring that it meets the Council's 'rules and expectation' for the web site.
- The Council reserves the right to remove any or all of a local group's information from the web site if it feels that the content does not meet the Council's 'rules and expectation' for its website. Where content on the website is maintained by a local group it should be clearly marked that such content is not the direct responsibility of the Council.
- In accordance with the Parish Council's adopted Communications Policy (Document CAD-Communications-July.2020.V1), clause no 2.3. the Parish Clerk is the Council's nominated Press Officer with the authority to issue official press releases. No other member of staff or the Parish Council (other than the Chairman deputising for the Parish Clerk) has the authority to issue public statements on behalf of the Council.

### Facebook

The Council does not currently have a facebook page

If this changes, this Policy will be updated to reflect any new arrangements.

### Video Conferencing (e.g. zoom)

If this medium is used to communicate please note that this policy and Standing Orders also applies to the use of video conferencing.

## **GUIDANCE FOR COUNCIL OFFICERS ON THE USE OF COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA**

- Officers should be familiar with the terms of use on third party websites – eg. Facebook - and adhere to these at all times
- No information should be published that is not already known to be in the public domain – ie. available on the Parish Council's website, contained in minutes of meetings, stated in Council publicised policies and procedures, etc.
- Information that is published should be factual, fair, thorough and transparent.
- Everyone must be mindful that information published in this way may stay in the public domain indefinitely, without the opportunity for retrieval/deletion.
- Copyright laws must be respected.
- Conversations or reports that are meant to be private or internal must not be published without permission.
- Other organisations should not be referenced without their approval – when referencing, link back to the original source wherever possible.
- Do not publish anything that would be regarded in the workplace as unacceptable.
- Parish Councillors and their staff must remember that they will be seen as ambassadors for the Council and should always act in a responsible and socially aware manner.

### **Third party Social Media and Individual Councillor Usage**

Councillors need to think about whether they are acting in a private capacity, or whether any impression might be conveyed that they are acting for and on behalf of Colsterworth and District Parish Council. The Council has adopted a Code of Conduct which is binding on all members. If you use Social Media in your official capacity as a councillor, you should always be mindful of the Code, and of the seven Nolan principles applicable to holding public office – selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

#### **Do:**

- Set appropriate privacy settings for any blog or networking site
- Watch out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on any blog or page and remove them as soon as possible to avoid any perception that you condone such vies

- Be aware that the higher your profile as a councillor, the more likely it is that you may be seen as acting in an official capacity when you blog or network
- Ensure any Council facilities are used appropriately – if using a Council-provided blog site or social networking area, any posts that you make are extremely likely to be viewed as being made in your official capacity
- Avoid publishing any information that you could only have accessed in your position as a councillor
- Be careful if making 'political' points and avoid being specific or personal about individuals.

**Don't:**

- Blog in haste
- Post comments that you would not be prepared to make in writing or in face-to-face contact
- Use Council facilities for personal or political purposes
- In any communications you should not bring the Parish Council in disrepute.

-End-

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