

# Akeley Parish Council Social Media Policy

The Social Media Policy was adopted by Full Council at its Meeting held on 01/11/21.

## 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.

## Definition of social media

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

## Purpose of the Policy

Social media provides the Council with the opportunity to communicate to a wider audience instantaneously on a range of subjects relating to its activities, providing updates, news, information, and relevant information from other sources. It also provides an opportunity to communicate with the younger age group, the business community and hopefully the harder to reach groups. The Council will make use of approved social media tools to quickly disseminate information, but carefully control its use to minimise the risks as stated above. In the first instance this will only include Facebook.

## Aims and Objectives

Social media can be used by the Council as an effective and measurable way to achieve resident engagement and attract publicity. The aim of this Policy is to ensure:

- Engagement with individuals and communities and successful promotion of Council based services using social media
- A consistent approach is adopted and maintained in the use of social media
- That Council information remains secure and is not compromised using 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, Facebook 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.

## **Good Practice / Guidelines when using Social Media**

- Remember that people classified as “friends” have the ability to download and share your information with others.
- Post only what you want the world to see. It is not like posting something to your web site or blog and then realising that a story or photo should be taken down. On a social networking site, once you post something it may continue to be available, even after it is removed from the site.
- Set your profile’s security and privacy settings carefully. At a minimum, all privacy settings should be set to “only friends”. “Friends of friends” and “Networks and Friends” open the content to a large group of unknown people.
- All activity on the Council Facebook page must follow the Council’s agreed statement of purpose and outcomes for the use of the networking tool.
- Do not post images that include young people without parental permission.
- Pay close attention to the site's security settings and allow only approved personnel full access to the site.
- Only add statements approved by either Full Council or the Parish Clerk. • Do not use commentary deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libellous. Exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colourful language, guesswork, obscenity, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions, and derogatory remarks or characterisations.
- To reduce security risks, do not install any external applications that work with the social networking site. Examples of these sites are calendar programs and games.
- Maintain updated anti-virus and malware protection to avoid infections of spyware and adware that social networking sites might place on your computer.
- Be careful not to fall for phishing scams that arrive via email or on your wall, providing a link for you to click, leading to a fake login page.
- If you find information on the social networking site that falls under the mandatory reporting guidelines then you must report it as required by law. Please stay informed and cautious in the use of all new networking technologies.

## **Policy Statement**

It is acknowledged that there is considerable potential for using social media which can provide significant advantages. The responsible, corporate use of social media is actively encouraged. The following applies equally to Officers and Members.

This policy provides a structured approach to using social media and will ensure that it is effective, lawful and does not compromise Council information or computer systems/networks. Users must ensure that they use social media responsibly and ensure that its use will not adversely affect the Council or its business, nor be damaging to the Council's reputation and credibility or otherwise violate any Council policies.

The following guidelines will apply to online participation and set out the standards of behaviour expected as a representative of Akeley Parish Council:

- Be aware of and recognise your responsibilities identified in the Social Media Policy.
- Remember that you are personally responsible for the content you publish on any form of social media.
- Never give out personal details of others such as home address and telephone numbers.
- Ensure that you handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the Data Protection Act.
- Use a disclaimer. When using social media for personal purposes, you must not imply you are speaking for the Council. Avoid use of the Council e-mail address, logos or other Council identification. Make it clear that what you say is representative of your personal views only. Where possible, you should include a standard disclaimer, such as: "Statements and opinions here are my own and don't necessarily represent the Council's policies or opinions".
- Know your obligations: you must comply with other Council policies when using social media. For example, you should be careful not to breach Council confidentiality and proprietary information policies.
- Show respect to all. You should be respectful of the authority and employees. Derogatory comments are always wrong.
- Use of the Parish Council's Facebook account must always reflect the Council's position/decisions on a matter and in no circumstances must it be used to express opinion, particularly when used by a Councillor. If unsure, say nothing. Councillors are at liberty to set up accounts using any of the tools available but should ensure they are clearly identified as personal and do not in any way imply that they reflect the Council's view. Councillors should always present a professional image and not disclose anything of a confidential nature. Comments of a derogatory, proprietary, or libellous nature should not be made and care should be taken to avoid guesswork, exaggeration and colourful language.
- When posting on the Parish Council Facebook page it was agreed the option for the public to comment will always be turned off

## **Responsibilities**

The Parish Clerk is the designated 'Council' owner of the Council Social Media channels agreed by the Council. Councillors officially appointed by the Council may assist the Parish Clerk to disseminate information. However, all must ensure they follow this policy. No account details may be changed without the permission of the Parish Clerk. Individual Councillors can if they choose to set up their own accounts as a Councillor, but they should ensure they comply with this policy and ensure the 'personal view' disclaimer is used.

Other than Facebook there it is not the intention to use any other forms of social media for official use by Akeley 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 always abide by this policy when doing so.

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