CHILDSWICKHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Social Media Policy
Adopted 04/07/24
Last updated 01/05/25

The aim of this Policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to staff and Parish Councillors in the use of online communications and social media. Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet. The 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, Instagram, TikTok and other micro blogging sites
- WhatsApp Groups
- Youtube and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- Bloggs and discussion forums
- Parish Council Emails

Who does it apply to?
The principles of the policy apply to Parish Councillors and all Council Staff. It is also intended for guidance for others communicating with the Parish Council. The policy sits alongside relevant existing polices which need to be taken into consideration.

Use of Social Media
The use of social media will not replace existing forms of communication. The website and other forms of social media will be used to enhance communication. Existing means of communication (such as the notice boards) will continue.

The Policy

1. The Council appoint the Clerk as nominated 'webmaster' to maintain and update the Parish Council website.
2. The Council appoint the Clerk as 'moderator'. The moderator will be responsible for posting and monitoring the content ensuring it complies with the Social Media Policy.
3. Social media may be used to:
    - Post minutes and dates of meetings
    - Advertise events and activities
    - Post good news stories
    - Advertise vacancies
    - Announce new information
    - Post or share information from other parish related community groups, clubs, associations, bodies or partners
4. All social media sites in use should be checked and updated on a regular basis and ensure that the security settings are in place.
5. Individual councillors are responsible for what they post and must adhere to the Code of Conduct.
6. When participating in any online communication:
    - Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent.
    - Always disclose your identity and affiliation to the Parish Council. Never make false or misleading statements.
    - Councillors should not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment.

- Councillors need to be mindful of the information they post on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council or bring the Council into disrepute or is contrary to the Council's Code of Conduct or any other policies.
- Keep the tone of your comments respectful and informative, never condescending or "loud." Use sentence case format, not capital letters, or write in red to emphasis points.
- Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks. Language that may be deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age or religion or belief should not be published on any social media site.
- Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications.
- Never use an individual's name unless you have written permission to do so.
- Permission to publish photographs or videos on social media sites should be sought from the persons or organisations in the video or photograph before being uploaded.
- Respect the privacy of other councillors and residents.
- Do not post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws, regulations, libel or copyright.

7. Residents and Councillors should note that not all communication requires a response.
   - There will not be immediate responses to communications as they may be discussed by the Parish Council and all responses will be agreed by the Parish Council.
   - The Clerk will be responsible for all final published responses.
   - Some communication from residents and other third parties may be required to be discussed at a Parish Council meeting. When this is necessary the item will be placed on the next available agenda.
8. The nominated moderator shall remove any negative posts which may contain personal and inflammatory remarks, libellous or defamatory information without further comment or notification. Such post will also be reported to the hosts (i.e. Facebook). Councillors or parishioners who have any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should report them to the Clerk. Misuse of such sites in a manner that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.
9. Social media is not monitored 24/7 and the Parish Council will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, the Parish Council will endeavour to ensure that any merging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people.
10. Sending a message/post via social media will not be considered as contacting the council for official purposes and we will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through these channels. Instead, please contact the Clerk directly to ensure a prompt response. Please do not include personal/private information in your Facebook posts/messages to the Council.

Changes to this policy

The Parish Council will review this policy annually (in May) or as is necessary and appropriate.