



**PILSLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

## **Social Media Policy**

<b>Policy Reference Number</b>	<b>Date Approved</b>	<b>Review Date</b>
33	11/7/2023	May 2027

### **Introduction**

1. The use of social media brings with it a variety of opportunities to communicate with various groups in new ways. Whilst we recognise the benefits which using social media brings, this policy sets out principles designed to ensure that all councillors and staff members use social media responsibly, and in a way that the individuals and reputation of the council are safeguarded. Staff and council members must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate when using social media.
2. This policy covers the use of social media for personal official council use. The policy applies to media platforms such as networking sites (e.g. Facebook, googlechat), blogs, microblogs such as Twitter, chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access, online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia and content sharing sites such as flickr and YouTube. However, this list is not exhaustive and new on-line platforms are to be considered automatically covered.
3. This policy also applies to online message boards/ forums and the comments sections under news items and other articles.
4. The internet is a rapidly evolving technology, and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media therefore the principles set out in this policy must be followed closely, irrespective of the medium or platform.

## **Purpose of policy and guidance**

5. To minimise the reputational, legal and governance risks to the council and its employees, arising from the use of social media by council members and staff in both personal and professional capacities.
6. To enable the safe use of social media for the purposes of communication and engagement.
7. To ensure a consistent approach is applied across the council.

## **Legal implications**

8. The use of the word 'member/s' refers to any councillor, member of staff or individual working on behalf of the parish council in an official capacity.
9. Members should be aware that there are a number of legal implications associated with the inappropriate use of social media. Liability can arise under the laws of:
  - Defamation
  - Copyright
  - Discrimination
  - Contract
  - Human Rights
  - Protection from harassment
  - Criminal Justice
  - Data Protection

## **Policy**

10. It is recognised that social media has rapidly expanded the variety of ways that we can communicate and engage with the public. This policy therefore encourages the responsible and professional use of the Internet and social media for communication and the delivery of council services.
11. The Internet provides an increasing range of social media tools which allows users to interact with each other. Whilst recognising the important benefits of these media for new opportunities for communication, this policy sets out the principles that members are required to follow when using social media.
12. It is essential that the public have confidence in the council's decisions and services. The principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure that members use social media responsibly so that confidentiality of the parish council and members of the

public are safeguarded. In this context, staff members must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate. .

13. It provides information and guidance for both professional and personal use and outlines the risks to users and schools, as well as the potential consequences of misuse of the internet and social media.
14. Where staff have concerns about e-safety, these should be raised with the clerk or communications officer as soon as possible.
15. This policy equally applies to all members any other individuals who work for or provide services on behalf of the parish council.

### **Users' responsibilities**

16. Any misuse of social media must be reported promptly to the clerk or communications officer.
17. All users must be aware that as soon as a post is made online, it is no longer within the private sphere or in the control of the original poster.
18. If a member is found to have breached this policy, they may be subject to the parish council's disciplinary procedure.

### **Principles**

19. In all communications from members, you should:
  - a) be conscious at all times of the need to keep personal and professional lives separate. Members should not put themselves in a position where there is a conflict between their work and personal interests.
  - b) not engage in activities involving social media which may bring the parish council into disrepute.
  - c) not represent their personal views as those of the parish council.
  - d) not discuss personal information about individuals that they interact with as part of their work, on social media.
  - e) be open, honest, ethical and profession.
  - f) use jargon-free, plain English in professional communications on social media.

## **Monitoring**

20. Social media accounts will be monitored by the communications officer and parish clerk, for the purpose of monitoring and policing responses to posts. If you see anything concerning, please bring this to the attention of the clerk or communications officer.
21. The parish council respects the privacy of its member. However, postings made on a personal account may attain a wide readership and will therefore be considered public rather than private. Public posts may be investigated if there is a suspected breach of this or related policies.

## **Personal use of Social Media**

22. Members are encouraged not to identify themselves as members of the parish council in their personal social media posts. This is to prevent information on these sites from being linked with Pilsley Parish Council and to safeguard the privacy of its members. This does not include professional networking sites.
23. Information members have access to as part of their employment, including personal information about members of the public and their families, colleagues and other parties must not be discussed on their personal social media platforms.
24. Members are advised to ensure that they set up and regularly review the privacy levels of their personal sites as strictly as they can and to opt out of public listings on social networking sites to protect their own privacy.
25. Members should keep their passwords confidential, change them often and be careful what is posted online; it is not safe to reveal home addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information.
26. Members should carefully select their social media profile picture as it is an extension to their professional image online.