

WEST LAVINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

This is the Social Media Policy Statement of WEST LAVINGTON PARISH COUNCIL:

The Council will establish and maintain internet-based social media sites to create and exchange information between individuals, organisations and communities, recognising that the use of these sites improves the Council's ability to engage with the communities it serves.

WHAT IS 'SOCIAL MEDIA'?

- 1 Social media is the use of web-based and mobile technology to create and exchange information between individuals, organisations and communities. The primary reasons for the use of social media are time sensitive communications, community engagement or as marketing information for initiatives.

APPLICATION

- 2 This is a high level policy which is intended to be used by councillors, employees, contractors and third parties that wish to utilise social media on behalf of the Council or to communicate with it. The policy covers the posting of comments by Councillors and Staff on Council and other social media sites together with the standards and etiquette expected of public and other contributors.
- 3 This policy enables effective use of social media whilst protecting the organisation's business information and any client or customer information within its custody or safekeeping by safeguarding its confidentiality, integrity and availability.
- 4 Specifically this policy deals with protecting the reputational integrity of the Council and provides an appropriate level of awareness, knowledge and skill to minimise the occurrence and severity of information security and reputation management incidents.
- 5 This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Council's Members' Code of Conduct and the Member/Officer Protocol, together with the Consultation, Communications and Engagement Policy.

SITE SET-UP

- 6 All social media internet sites operated for the Council must be approved by the Council, and the Clerk will be the site administrator.
- 7 The site administrator will be responsible for monitoring, responding, upkeep and content of any social media material within the sites.
- 8 Where possible the sites must ensure that they meet the Council's Equalities policy (e.g. in relation to accessibility standards) and related policies.
- 9 The Council will continue to have its primary presence and engagement on the Internet through its main website and wherever possible all referenced information will be made available on the main website, or those of partner organisations.
- 10 Where possible there should be a link on the relevant council web page to the relevant social media platform and vice versa.

CONTENT

- 11 All the Council's Social Media sites are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and Data Protection Act (DP). The administrator is responsible for responding to all FOI and DP requests and breaches. Statements should be posted on the site to any posting participant that the post will be kept on record and can be disclosed to the public where appropriate.
- 12 The retention period of any information should meet statutory requirements.

- 13 Users of the Social Media site must be informed of the purpose of the site.
- 14 Users must be informed that their posts may not be published or may be deleted if:
 - Comments are not topical to the article being discussed;
 - Comments are politically motivated;
 - Comments are anonymous or from pseudonyms.
 - Profane language or content is used;
 - Material perpetuates or promotes discrimination of protected characteristics as defined in Equalities legislation.
 - It is sexual content or links to sexual content;
 - It is solicitation of commerce;
 - It is illegal conduct or encouragement/support of illegal activities;
 - It is Information that compromises or may compromise the safety or security of the public;
 - Content violates the legal ownership interests of any other party.
- 15 All social media sites must have the above statements displayed or made available via a link. Any content based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster when available. The Council reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law.
- 16 Where an issue is potentially damaging to the reputation of the Council the Clerk should be informed, who will advise the Chairman accordingly.

POSTING

- 17 Postings on behalf of the Council will only be made by the Clerk.
- 18 Parish Councillors wishing to make a posting concerning Council matters using their own private sites must make clear their opinions are personal and not necessarily those of the Council. If not confident to do so, advice can be sought from the Clerk.
- 19 Where a mistake is made in a posting, it should be publically corrected at the earliest opportunity.
- 20 External posters will be required to provide their (real) name and response address and required to confirm they accept our terms and conditions where the platform allows.

STANDARDS

- 21 It is important to engender respect for employees, the Council and users. This should be reflected in all postings by all users. The Members' Code of Conduct will assist councillors in this regard.
- 22 All users should ensure their entries comply with the following etiquette: -
 - I will tell the truth;
 - I will write deliberately and with accuracy;
 - I will acknowledge and correct mistakes promptly;
 - I will preserve the original post, using notations to show where I have made changes so as to maintain the integrity of my publishing;
 - I will never delete a post, although a poster could delete their own post and repost correct information where there is an error such as an incorrect link, providing no one has liked or commented on it;
 - I will not delete comments unless they do not meet the requirements of this policy;
 - I will reply to emails and comments when appropriate, and do so promptly;
 - I will strive for high quality with every post – including basic spellchecking;
 - I will stay on topic;
 - I will disagree with other opinions respectfully;
 - I will link to online references and original source materials directly;
 - I will disclose conflicts of interest;
 - I will keep private issues and topics separate from work issues and topics.