



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

ADOPTED 11 FEBRUARY 2019

INTRODUCTION

Broadwindsor Group Parish Council supports the use of social media as part of its wider communications strategy. The aim of this Policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to Parish Councillors, Council Committees and Sub-Committees, members of staff and others who engage with the Council using online communications. Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet. This 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 and other micro blogging sites
- YouTube and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- Bloggs and discussion forums
- Email

This Policy sits alongside the current Code of Conduct which applies to online activity in the same way as it does to other written or verbal communication.

PURPOSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The Parish Council will encourage the use of social media for the purposes of:

- Providing and exchanging information about services
- Supporting local democracy
- Gathering parishioner insights and managing parishioner relationships
- Promoting events for the area
- Supporting community cohesion, neighbourliness and resilience
- Creating internal communications, learning and development

Social media may be used by the Parish Council to:

- Signpost to agendas, minutes and dates of meetings
- Advertise events and activities
- Promote good news stories
- Advertise vacancies
- Share information from other organisations
- Announce new information
- Poll opinion
- Support a campaign/project
- Refer queries to the Clerk/Councillors

MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The Parish Council will appoint a 'Webmaster' to manage the Council's online presence. This will be the Clerk to the Council. The Clerk will be responsible for posting and monitoring content and ensuring that it complies with the Social Media Policy. Requests from Councillors to post content should be made to the Clerk. The Clerk will have the authority to remove any posts made by third parties on Parish Council social media pages which are deemed to be of a defamatory or libellous nature.

RULES ON USING SOCIAL MEDIA

- Broadwindsor Group Parish Council will ensure that its online content is accurate, objective, balanced and informative.
- Parish Councillors and members of staff are responsible for what they post. All comments made should be respectful and informative.
- Parish Councillors and members of staff are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published e-mail address which is used for Council business.
- Parish Councillors and members of staff should always disclose their identity and affiliation to the Council. They should not hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms.
- Parish Councillors and members of staff should never make false or misleading statements.
- Parish Councillors and members of staff should never post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the Council.
- Parish Councillors and members of staff should never engage in personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications.
- Permission should be sought to publish original photographs or video from the persons or organisations in the video or photographs before they are uploaded.
- Photographs or videos of minors should never be published without parental permission.

- If Councillors or members of staff post social media content personally and not in their role as a Councillor or employee, they must not act, claim to act or give the impression that they are acting as a representative of the Council. They should not include web links to official Council websites as this may give or reinforce the impression that they are representing the Council.
- Posts must not contain anyone's personal information other than necessary basic contact details, unless third party permission has been granted.
- Parish Councillors and members of staff should not disclose information, make comments, make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of the Council unless authorised to do so. Advice from the Clerk should be requested if there is any doubt.
- Social media must be used for lawful purposes only, and must comply with relevant legislation such as, but not limited to; the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, Obscene Publications Act, The Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1998, Computer Misuse Act 1990.
- Councillors and members of staff must not publish or link to any posts or content (text, images or video) that may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection and confidence or other claims for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, discriminatory, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the Council into disrepute.
- Councillors and members of staff must not comment on or use Broadwindsor Group Parish Council social media accounts for political purposes or specific campaigning purposes. The Council is not permitted to publish material which 'in whole or part appears to affect public support for a political party' (LGA 1986).
- Parish Councillors' views posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the Parish Council at a Council or committee meeting may constitute Pre-disposition, Pre-determination or Bias and may require the individual to declare an interest at Council meetings.
- All posts should be spell and grammar checked before publishing.

RESPONDING TO SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media as a method of communication is two-way, it is as much about listening as speaking. Broadwindsor Group Parish Council appreciates that not all users of social media will share its point of view, nor its goals. These differing perspectives will be treated with respect.

- If a matter that is raised in any form of social media needs further consideration by the Parish Council, it may be raised at either the open forum or as a full agenda item for consideration by Councillors. Any response agreed by the Council will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

- Reports of any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should be reported to the Clerk for referral to the Council as required.
- Posts which are deemed to be defamatory or libellous in nature will be removed. Advice from the Monitoring Officer or Dorset Police will be requested when appropriate.
- Not all communication through social media requires a response. Consideration of when a response is needed and whether a different channel may be more appropriate should be given.
- Parish Councillors and members of staff should not become embroiled in lengthy dialogue/discussions using social media.
- Measures to correct misinformation should be implemented when necessary.
- Measures to reinforce key messages to ensure consistency should be implemented when necessary.

MEDIA

Postings on social media may attract media interest. All requests from the media should be directed to the Clerk so that a suitable response can be agreed.

REVIEW

All social media sites in use should be checked on a regular basis to ensure that the security settings are in place. The social media landscape is constantly changing and evolving. Broadwindsor Group Parish Council will undertake regular social media audits to ascertain which channels are most active and this Policy will be reviewed annually.