

HOTON PARISH COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

This policy is intended to help councillors and staff to make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as emails, blogs, social networking websites including Facebook, X and other relevant social media websites.

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

- Providing and exchanging information about services
- Supporting local democracy
- Gathering insights from and managing relationships with parishioners
- Promoting events or tourism for the area
- Supporting community cohesion, neighbourliness and resilience

This policy outlines the standards the Council requires councillors and staff members to observe when using social media.

This policy supplements and should be read in conjunction with all other policies and procedures adopted by the Council, such as the Equal Opportunities Policy, Data Protection Policy, Disciplinary Procedure, Members Code of Conduct etc.

Who is covered by this policy

This policy covers all individuals working within the Council, including all elected and co-opted councillors, the Clerk to the Council and all other employees and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

Approved Council Social Media

1) Parish Council email hotonparishcouncil@googlemail.com

2) Parish Council website www.hotonparishcouncil.gov.uk

The clerk shall be the website administrator and shall ensure that the website is kept up to date.

The website may be used to:

- Post notices and minutes of meetings
- Advertise events and activities
- Post good news stories
- Link to appropriate websites or press page if those sites meet the Council's expectations of conduct
- Advertise vacancies
- Share information from partners i.e. Police, library, borough or county council etc.
- Post or share information promoting bodies for community benefit such as schools, sports clubs and community groups
- Post other items as the Council see fit

Users of Council Social Media

Staff and individual parish councillors are responsible for what they post. They are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published e-mail address which is used for Council business. Both staff and councillors are strongly advised to have separate council and personal email addresses.

In accordance with the Council's adopted Media Relations Policy, the Parish Clerk is the Council's nominated

HOTON PARISH COUNCIL

Press Officer authorised to issue press releases. No other member of staff should be issuing public statements on behalf of the Council.

Guidance for officers on the use of Council social media

- Information should be factual, fair, thorough and transparent
- Officers should know the terms of use on third party websites, e.g. Facebook
- Be mindful that all information published may stay in the public domain ad infinitum.
- Respect copyright and other laws.
- Do not publish or report on conversations that are meant to be private or internal, without permission
- Posts must not contain personal information, other than necessary basic contact details
- Do not reference other organisations without their approval. When you do make a reference, link back to the source where possible.
- Do not publish anything that would not be acceptable in the workplace.
- Remember that you are an ambassador for the Council and be cordial at all times.

Usage of third party media in your official capacity as a Parish Councillor

You will need to think about whether you are acting as a Councillor, or giving the impression that you are representing your authority. The Council has adopted a Code of Members Conduct which is binding for all members of the Council. If you use social media in your official capacity as a Parish Councillor, or may be perceived to be acting in your official capacity, you should be mindful of the seven Nolan principles of the public life: Selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Do

- Consider the tone and language that you use.
- Set appropriate privacy settings for your blog or networking site.
- Keep an eye out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on your blog or page and remove them as soon as possible to avoid the perception that you condone such views
- Ensure you use Council facilities appropriately; if you use a Council provided social networking area, any posts you make are likely to be viewed as made in your official capacity
- Be aware that by publishing information that you could not have accessed without your position as a Councillor you are likely to be seen as acting in your official capacity

Don't

- Use social media in haste
- Post comments that you would not be prepared to make in writing or face to face
- Use Council facilities for personal or political blogs
- Make false or misleading statements
- Name an individual third party unless you have written permission to do so

Concerns

Reports of any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should be made to the Clerk for referral to Council as required.

Adopted by Hoton Parish Council at its meeting on 7th September 2015 and last reviewed May 2024.