

Laceby Parish Council



Social Media Policy

Aims

The aim of this policy is to set out a Code of Practice and provide guidance to Laceby Parish Councillors, Parish Council staff and others who engage with the council in the use of online communications, referred to as social media.

Social Media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing content on the internet. This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):

- The Parish Council Website
- Parish Council Emails
- Facebook, Instagram, 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

The principles of this policy apply to Parish Councillors, Parish Council employees and others communicating with the Parish Council. It is also intended for guidance for others communicating with the Parish Council. This policy sits alongside relevant existing policies which include:

- Code of Conduct Policy
- Data Protection
- Confidentiality Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- LPC HR and Employment Policies

The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication, and the protocols around this, but should be used to enhance communication.

The Parish Councils current Code of Conduct applies to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. Online content should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate. What you write on the web is permanent.

In the main, Councillors and staff have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failures to comply with the law may have more serious consequences. There are some additional duties around using websites and promotional material for electoral campaigning and extra care needs to be taken when writing on planning matters – see further guidelines below.

Guidelines

Councillors using their own social media accounts or any other form of communication for the community or other purposes do so as private individuals and should not use any privileged material gained from their position as a Parish Councillor when they do use social media.

The Chair of the Parish Council or the Clerk to the Parish Council will be responsible for administrating Parish Council social media information. Parish Council posts or Parish Council comments on posts should only be made with prior approval from the Chair of the Parish Council.

All Parish Council correspondence, press releases or contact with the media should be made via the Chair or Clerk to the Council. The Chair or Vice Chair have final approval on any marketing information, communication or statements made on behalf of the Parish Council.

Councillors wishing to utilise social media in respect of the Parish Council should email the Clerk with the proposed content and posting instructions with a copy sent to the Chair and Vice Chair. **Note – where possible posts should cross reference to the Parish Council website and provide an appropriate link.** Once approved by either the Chair or Vice Chair, the Parish Clerk will make the post or comment as instructed.

The Parish Clerk may initiate posts or comments without prior approval for the purpose of circulating or responding with public domain information, public service notices and details from approved Parish Council minutes or on instructions from a full council meeting.

The Parish Council Clerk will maintain and update the Parish Council Website. This form of social media may be used to:

- Post minutes and dates of meetings
- Post approved council policies and information
- Advertise dates of meetings, events and activities
- Good news stories linked to website or press page
- Vacancies for both Councillors and Staff
- Sharing information from partners (i.e. Police, Library, Community Groups etc)
- Announcing new information
- Publish information about the work of Laceby Parish Council to a wider audience.

Emails will be used to distribute information of council business.

Individual Parish Councillors are responsible for what they post. Councillors are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published email address which is used for council business. Councillors are strongly advised to have separate council and personal email addresses.

Code of Practice

Guidance when using social media (including email):

- All social media in use should be regularly checked and updated to ensure that the correct security settings are in place.
- When participating in any online communication:
 - As a Parish Council we have a professional image to uphold and how we conduct ourselves online impacts this image.
 - Be responsible, respectful; be direct, informative, brief, transparent.
 - Always disclose your identity and affiliation to the Parish Council. Never make false or misleading statements.
 - Parish Councillors & the Parish Council employees should not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment. All Parish Councillors and employees 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 and any other Policies.

- Keep the tone of comments respectful and informative, never condescending or "loud". Use sentence format, not capital letters, or write in red to emphasise points. Spell and grammar check everything, and correct any errors promptly.
- Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks, Language that may be deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, gender, age, 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 or regulations (see below regarding libel and copyright).
- Social Media and Meetings
 - The Council encourages Councillors to keep residents informed of Laceby Community issues, and the use of social media can help with this, however consideration should be given to:
 - Having electronic devices on mute during Parish Council Meetings
 - Not undertaking tweets, blogs or posts during Council Meetings as this demonstrates you are not engaging in the meeting.
 - Not engaging in insults of other members on social media.
- Residents and Councillors should note that not all communication requires a response.
 - There may not be immediate responses to communications as they may need to be discussed by the Full Council and all responses will be agreed by either the Full Council, or if not contentious on approval of the Chair or Vice Chair.
 - The Clerk will be responsible for all final published responses having referred to the Full Council, Chair or Vice Chair as appropriate and where necessary.
 - If the matter or communication needs further consideration, it may be raised as a full agenda item for discussion at the next appropriate meeting, recorded within the minutes and the person raising the communication will be notified accordingly.
 - If it is felt that a post/communication is of a contentious nature, this will be referred to the Chair or Vice Chair. The person raising the post/communication will be advised that they may correspond directly with the Chair or Vice Chair.
- Councillors or Parishioners who have any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should report them to the Clerk at the earliest opportunity. Misuse of sites in a manner that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.

Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed every 4 years or earlier should legislation or practice require.