



## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

## Stoke Mandeville Parish Council – social media policy

<b>Title</b>	<b>Social media policy</b>
<b>Owner</b>	<b>Chairman</b>
<b>Version number</b>	<b>0.2</b>
<b>Primary audience</b>	<b>Councillors and staff</b>
<b>Document location</b>	<b>Shared drive</b>
<b>Objective</b>	
This policy sets out, for the benefit of councillors and staff, the council's position on the use of social media by them.	

### 1. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

1.1 Social media provides the Parish Council with the opportunity to communicate to a wide audience instantaneously on a range of subjects relating to its activities, providing updates, news, information and responding to queries from residents.

It also provides an opportunity to communicate with younger age groups and those who do not make widespread use of long-established forms of communication, such as newspapers.

The Parish Council will make use of approved social media tools to quickly disseminate information but carefully control its use to minimise associated risks.

1.2 Social media can be used by the Parish Council as an effective and measurable way to achieve resident engagement and attract publicity.

The aim of this Policy is to ensure:

- Engagement with individuals and communities and successful promotion of Parish Council-based services using social media
- A consistent approach is adopted and maintained in the use of social media
- That Parish Council information remains secure and is not compromised through the use of social media
- That users operate within existing policies, guidelines, and relevant legislation
- That the Parish Council's reputation is upheld and improved rather than adversely affected
- That communication by use of social media is effective, timely, appropriate, useful, engages with a wider audience and is consistent with and supportive of other Parish Council communication tools such as the website

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1.3 in this policy, 'social media' is a term for websites based on user participation and user-generated content. They include social networking sites and other sites that are centred on user interaction. From time to time, the Parish Council will agree which social media sites are to form part of its communications strategy and this policy will apply equally to them.

### **2. BENEFITS AND RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

2.1 The use of social media brings several benefits:

- Large and diverse audiences can be reached quickly with relevant information and updates.
- Younger audiences can be reached more readily than through other channels.
- Articles can be shared on with a wider audience.
- There is a more direct connection with those receiving information.
- The use of pictures and video can make messages more appealing.
- It can drive readers to other sources of information such as the council website.
- Information can be made more relevant by posting only to a particular group or geographical location.

2.2 In setting out those advantages of social media, it is important to recognise that it has disadvantages and risks too. This policy aims to remind councillors and staff of these, so that they act accordingly.

- The information in most cases is shared in the public domain and can be viewed by anyone in the world. There are not always access controls in place as to who can view the content.
- The nature of social media is that information is shared immediately, and it is all too easy to respond instantaneously which can result in unintentionally inflaming a situation. Information can then be shared with other sites and be spread far beyond the intended audience, to those who may misunderstand or not have the Parish Council's interests at heart.
- It is also very easy to spend a lot of time viewing and responding to messages that would outweigh the value gained in the first place.

### **3. SPECIFIC POLICY STATEMENT**

3.1 Users must ensure that they use social media sensibly and responsibly, and ensure that its use will not adversely affect the Parish Council or its business, nor be damaging to the Parish Council's reputation and credibility or otherwise violate any Parish Council policies.

3.2 The following guidelines will apply to online participation and set out the standards of behaviour expected from councillors and staff of the Parish Council:

- Be aware of and recognise your responsibilities identified in this Social Media Policy.
- Remember that you are personally responsible for the content you publish on any form of social media.
- Never give out personal details of others such as home address and telephone numbers.

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- Ensure that you handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the Data Protection Act.
- If using social media for personal purposes unrelated to your Parish Council role, you must not imply you are speaking for the Parish Council. Avoid use of the Parish Council e-mail address, logos, or other Parish Council identification. Make it clear that what you say is representative of your personal views only. Where possible, you should include a standard disclaimer, such as: "Statements and opinions here are my own and don't necessarily represent Stoke Mandeville Parish Council's policies or opinions".
- You must comply with other Parish Council policies when using social media. For example, you should be careful not to breach the Parish Council's complaints policy.
- Show respect to all. You should be respectful of the council, fellow councillors, staff, and residents.
- Use of the Parish Council's Facebook page must always reflect the Council's position/decisions on a matter and in no circumstances must it be used to express personal opinion, particularly when used by a Councillor. If unsure, say nothing.

### **4. RESPONSIBILITIES**

4.1 The Clerk is the designated owner of such social media channels agreed and operated by the Parish Council from time to time. Councillors and other staff officially appointed by the Council may assist the Clerk to operate them. However, they must ensure they follow this policy. No account details, passwords etc may be changed without the permission of the Clerk.

4.2 Individual Councillors and staff are at liberty to set up their own social media accounts, but they should ensure they comply with this policy and ensure the 'personal view' disclaimer is used.

### **5. BREACHES OF POLICY**

5.1 Breaches of this policy by staff may be considered a breach of the Parish Council's disciplinary rules, which may in turn lead to disciplinary action.

5.2 If staff or councillors see content on social media that a reasonable person would consider reflects poorly on the Parish Council, they should refer this to the Clerk or Chairman.

#### **Supporting Materials**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following supporting materials:

- Editorial policy (to be written)

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### Review and approval

Sign off		
Finance & Governance C'tee	09/02/21	
Full Parish Council	15/06/21	
Next review date		
This policy should be reviewed every other year or when significant change occurs to the subject matter.		
The next review date for this policy is <b>1 February 2023</b> .		

### Version Control / History

Version no.	Author	Date	Status/Comments
0.1	GWS	04.02.2021	Policy drafted
0.2	GWS	10.03.2021	Amended following full parish council to add section on benefits of social media