

1. Introduction

Social media is a term commonly used for web-based tools available on the internet that allow people to interact with each other in some way by sharing information, knowledge, opinions and interests.

- Examples of social media sites include:
- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn)
- Micro-blogging sites (e.g. X (formerly known as Twitter))
- Blogs and personal websites
- Messaging boards
- Bookmarking websites (e.g. del.icio.ous)
- Photo and video content sharing sites (e.g. YouTube, Pinterest, Flickr , Instagram)

This list is not exhaustive as social media is a constantly evolving area and the types of social media available may change over time.

Weeley Parish Council will utilise social media as a channel for communicating with interested parties. Designated Parish Councillors will have authority to speak on behalf of Weeley Parish Council and a designated councillor will be responsible for managing the Parish Councils official sites, currently Facebook, but in future for any other sites e.g. X , Wordpress, Instagram and YouTube.

Social media, like other communication tools, is used to improve the public's understanding of the Council and its work, foster and engage with the general public. The following 'rules should be observed when engaging in communication via any social media channel:

- is respectful towards all members of the public
- does not reveal confidential or sensitive information
- is transparent
- updates the channels on a regular basis and respond to users posts
- removes any content that is considered offensive or derogatory

2. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the responsibilities of councillors when using social media and the legal implications involved; to illustrate where problems can arise for individual staff members and to differentiate between using a personal social media account and an official WPC account.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors updating the social media channels in an official capacity or responding to messages in a personal capacity.

4. Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to enable councillors

- to understand their responsibilities when using social media and what should, and should not, be electronically written or posted

- to highlight the potential risks involved when posting on a social networking site
- to document the Parish Councils intentions for the use of social media
- to understand the implications of using social media inappropriately

5. Responsibilities

All councillors updating or posting have a responsibility to follow the principles set out in this policy and to ensure that there is Council agreement about what is being published and where.

6. Principles

Social media has blurred the boundaries between a person's private and professional life. Individuals or groups who use social media in their personal life should therefore be mindful that inappropriate use could damage their own reputation and that of the organisation/council/committee. When posting/updating or responding to posts the councillors must adhere to the Parish Council code of conduct

Use of Social Media

Respect Others

Posts must not contain anything contrary to WPC policies on equality, diversity and inclusion. Anything containing racist, sexist, homophobic, sexually explicit, threatening, abusive, disrespectful or other unlawful comments must not be published.

Be Aware of how Online Posts are, or Can Become Public

Everyone should be aware of privacy limitations when posting material using social media, and the extent to which information can be in the public domain. Whatever is posted on a social media site could be in the public domain immediately or, if initially shared with a limited group of followers or friends, could still be copied and shared or published elsewhere. Carefully consider what you want to say before publishing anything and work on the basis that anything you write or post could be shared more widely without your knowledge or permission.

Remember

- social media sites will not guarantee confidentiality and
- once information is online, it is almost impossible to remove it completely.

Beware when sharing or retweeting posts, as this could be seen to be endorsing someone else's point of view.

Get your Facts Right

When posting information, make sure it is factually correct. Always post a correction if you cannot retract.

Ensure Comments are Legal

All comments must be legal and must not incite people to commit a crime. Comments

on social networking sites are still covered by British Law, even if posted using a pseudonym. Comments can still result in legal action from an individual or Police prosecution. This is in Page | 3 line with the Malicious Communications Act 1988. Understand the implications of defamation of character and respect copyright

7. Facebook Posting Rules

- The Clerk and 2 other Councillors will have Admin rights to the Facebook Page
- The clerk will not post on behalf of the Council but will have access in the case of all Admins leaving the council.
- No posts should be made without agreement of the majority of the Council
- The Facebook page will be Read Only and just available to post relevant information
- If the Council wishes to comment on any other Facebook groups this will be done by either of the Admins as the Council once majority agreement is reached.
- Examples of posts to be made on the WPC Facebook page are : PC Meetings, Information on Events, Govt Information, Useful Information for the Village