

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Cringleford Parish Council

1. Introduction

The objective of this policy is to provide Councillors and staff an overview of Social Media and outline the Council's position on various aspects of their use. In addition, it includes guidelines on Staff and Councillor responsibilities when using such channels of communication.

2. Definition of Social Media

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.

Social media has the following characteristics:

- Covers a wide variety of formats, including text, video, photographs, audio
- Allows messages to flow between many different types of device; PCs, phones and tablets
- Involves different levels of engagement by participants who can create, comment or just view information
- Speeds and broadens the flow of information
- Provides one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communications
- Lets communication take place in real time or intermittently

Examples of popular social media tools include: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Linked In. Groupings of interest are a natural feature of the development of such systems with people with similar interests being attracted to share information.

3. Purpose of the Policy

Social media provides the Council with the opportunity to communicate to a wide audience instantaneously on a range of subjects relating to its activities, providing updates, news and information. It also provides an opportunity to communicate with the younger age group, the business community and hopefully the harder to reach groups.

The Council will make use of approved social media tools to quickly disseminate information but carefully control its use in order to minimise the risks as stated above. In the first instance this includes Facebook, and Next Door on top of the parish council website. The Willow Centre also has an Instagram account used for promotion of the venue and events within.

4. Aims and Objectives

Social media can be used by the 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 council-based services through the use of social media
- A consistent approach is adopted and maintained in the use of social media
- That 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 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 utilises cross-promotion of other Council communication tools (eg website, newsletters and notice boards).

Social media activity isn't something that stands alone, to be effective it needs to integrate as part of the general communications mix. Any planned campaigns, promotions and activities can be plugged in to social media platforms to increase reach and exposure.

5. Policy Statement

This policy provides a structured approach to using social media and will ensure that it is effective, lawful and does not compromise Council information or computer systems/networks.

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

The following guidelines will apply to online participation and set out the standards of behaviour expected as a representative of Cringleford Parish Council, when carrying out social media postings on behalf of the parish council or in any personal posts that mention the parish by name

- 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.
- Ensure that you handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.
- Use a disclaimer. When using social media for personal purposes, you must not imply you are speaking for the council. Avoid use of the council e-mail address, logos or other council identification. Make it clear that what you say is representative of your personal views only.
- Show respect to all. You should be respectful of the authority and employees. Derogatory comments are always wrong.
- Use of the Council's Facebook account must always reflect the Council's position/decisions on a matter and in no circumstances must it be used to express personal opinion.

Councillors are at liberty to set up accounts using any of the tools available but should ensure they are clearly identified as personal and do not in any way imply that they reflect the Council's view. Councillors should at all times present a professional image and not disclose anything of a confidential nature.

7. Responsibilities

The Clerk is the designated owner of the Parish Council and The Willow Centre Facebook accounts, Instagram account and any other Social Media channels agreed by the Council. The Assistant Parish Clerk assists the Clerk to disseminate information but the overall responsibility for the content remains that of the Clerk. All staff must ensure they follow this policy and no account details may be changed without the permission of the Clerk. .

Negative comments which are received as a result of a Facebook post should only be responded to with factual information and on-line arguments must always be avoided.

Last review July 2023
Next review July 2027

Date agreed: July 2023
Review date: July 2027