

RINGMER PARISH COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

This policy sets out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to Parish Councillors, employees, volunteers, and others who engage with the Parish Council using online communications, collectively referred to as social media

Aims and Objectives

Social media is used here as a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet.

This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include, but are not limited to:

- Parish Council Website
- Facebook and other social networking sites
- YouTube and other video clips and podcast sites
- Blogs and discussion forums
- Email

The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication.

The principles of this policy apply to Parish Councillors, employees, and volunteers, and also to others communicating with the Parish Council.

The policy sits alongside relevant existing policies which need to be taken into consideration.

The current Code of Conduct applies to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication.

Individual Parish Councillors, employees and volunteers are responsible for what they post in a Council and personal capacity.

In the main, Parish Councillors, employees and volunteers have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failure to comply with the law may have more serious consequences.

Social media may be used to:

- Distribute agendas, post minutes and dates of meetings
- Advertise events and activities
- Publish good news stories linked website or press pages
- Advertise vacancies
- Re-tweet or share information from partner agencies such as Principal Authorities, Police, Library, Health etc.
- Announce new information
- Post or share information from other parish related community groups such as schools, sports clubs, community groups and charities
- Refer resident queries to the Clerk and all other Councillors

Code of Practice

When using social media (including email) Parish Councillors, employees and volunteers must be mindful of the information they post in both a personal and council capacity and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative.

Online content should be accurate, objective, balanced and informative.

Parish Councillors, employees and volunteers must not:

1. Hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms
2. Present personal opinions as those of the council
3. Present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to the Parish Council
4. Post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the Parish Council
5. Post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks
6. Engage in personal attacks, online fights, and hostile communications
7. Use an individual's name unless given written permission to do so
8. Publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
9. Post any information that infringes the copyright of others
10. Post any information that may be deemed libel
11. Post online activity that constitutes bullying or harassment
12. Bring the council into disrepute, including through content posted in a personal capacity
13. Post offensive language relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion, or belief
14. Conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence

Councillors' views posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the Parish Council at a Parish Council or Committee meeting may constitute Pre-disposition, Predetermination or Bias and may require the individual to declare an interest at council meetings

Anyone with concerns regarding content placed on social media sites that denigrate Parish Councillors, employees or volunteers, or residents should report them to the Clerk of the Council.

Misuse of social media content by Parish Councillors, employees, or volunteers, that is contrary to this and other policies, could result in action being taken by the Parish Council.

The Clerk will have authority to remove from Parish Council social media pages any posts made by third parties which are deemed to be of a defamatory or libellous nature.

Document Revision History

Date	Version	Revision
	1.0 Final	Parish Council adoption as per minute