

Buckworth Parish Council Social Media Policy

1. Introduction.

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

2. 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 the work of the Parish Council using social media
- A consistent approach is adopted and maintained in the use of social media
- The Council information remains secure and is not compromised when using social media as an additional communication platform
- The council welcomes enquiries from the press and media and recognises that a good relationship with the press helps communicate effectively with residents.
- The council recognises that taking a proactive approach to communication ensures information is made available to residents in a timely manner and is accessible via as many media sources as possible including emerging social media platforms.
- The use of social media will be an additional way to communicate with residents and will enhance the current communication channels already in place
- Those 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, engaging with a wider audience and utilises cross-promotion of other Council communication tools e.g., website
- Social media activity isn't something that stands alone. To be effective it needs to integrate as part of the overall communication strategy of the council. Any planned campaigns, promotions and activities can be plugged into social media platforms to increase reach and exposure.

- Generic news – what’s happening in the area, where and when

The use of social media provides Buckworth Parish Council with the opportunity to consult and communicate to a wider audience simultaneously on a range of issues relating to the activities of the Council. It also provides an opportunity to communicate with a greater demographic within the Parish (younger people, business community and harder to reach groups).

While there are too many social media sites to include all of them, the council will endeavour to use those which are most widely used, and regularly review the type and number of social media sites used.

Social media sites will be used to support other communications already issued by the council and will help provide a consistent message across all media formats. To help achieve this, all social media releases will be approved by the Clerk (or other nominated officer).

It is important that where officers use social media in a professional capacity to represent the council, the council’s corporate identity will be used and not that of any individual officer. Officers using social media in this way must respect copyright, data protection, freedom of information and other laws, and be aware of the risks of action for defamation. Officers must not use insulting or offensive language or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace or elsewhere.

5. General guidance for councillors and officers

- Councillors and officers must ensure they do not disclose information that is of a confidential nature. This includes any discussion with the press or other media on any matter which has been discussed under confidential items on council or committee agendas or at any other private briefing.
- Councillors and officers should always act with integrity when representing or acting on behalf of the council.
- Councillors should not use the prefix ‘Councillor’ when writing to the press as an individual. This implies you are stating council policy, which is not necessarily consistent with your personal opinion.
- Any councillor failing to follow the guidelines set out in this policy may find themselves in breach of the Members’ Code of Conduct and subject to a complaint to the Monitoring Officer.
- Any officer failing to follow the guidance set out in this policy could face disciplinary action.

6. Policy statement

It is acknowledged that there is considerable potential for using social media which can provide significant advantages. The responsible, corporate use of social media is actively encouraged. The following applies equally to the Clerk and Councillors.

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