

HORSEHEATH PARISH COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to set out the process by which the council manages its' social media including but not limited to Facebook, X, You Tube, and the Parish Council website <http://www.horseheath-pc.gov.uk>

Introduction

Social media is a term used for websites and applications that enable users to create and participate in social networking. The policy is intended to assist councillors and staff to make appropriate decisions about the use of social media, and help the council utilise social media platforms to promote the work of the council whilst managing comments made by members of the public.

Scope

The policy applies to all staff and councillors including instances where councillors have set up their own social media accounts in their public role as councillor. The Council's Code of Conduct applies to all online activity carried out by councillors in the same manner as it applies to any other written or verbal communication.

Councillors' social media pages

Councillors can set up their own individual social media pages but must remember that the Code of Conduct still applies to everything they post online. Councillors are not permitted to use council logos or other council identification on personal social media pages, including those pages owned by them using their councillor name. Only council owned social media pages may contain council identification. Councillor social media pages must include a disclaimer making it clear that any views expressed are personal views and not the views of the council. Anyone posting on social media must be aware of legislation particularly the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Equality Act 2010. No information can be published that has been received in confidence. At all times, treat others with respect, avoiding personal attacks and disrespectful, rude or offensive comments. Ensure that any posts do not bring the council into disrepute.

Council social media pages

The Clerk will be responsible for posting on all council owned/run social media pages. If a councillor wishes to post on the council's social media pages they should contact the Clerk with their proposed text. The decision of the Clerk, as to whether to add the social media post is final, but councillors will be consulted if their post is inappropriate or needs revision. Staff posting on social media should ensure that the information they are posting is accurate, objective, balanced and informative. Posts should adhere to the council's existing policies and, if sharing a third party's content or link, should ensure

the work is credited to the third party concerned. Corporate council content should not contain party political material, nor promote individual councillors. The council will promote community projects/events on their social media pages. Staff will moderate all social media posts, including comments made by members of the public.

Anyone postings on social media must not:

- Use false names or pseudonyms to hide identities
- Present personal opinions or comments as those of the council
- Present individuals in a way that may cause embarrassment to the council
- Post content that is contrary to the decisions of the council
- Post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks
- Engage in personal attacks, online arguments, and hostile communications
- Identify a third person without their express permission
- Publish photographs or videos of minors without parental or guardian permission
- Post any information that infringes the copyright of others
- Post any content that may be deemed libel
- Post any content that constitutes bullying or harassment
- Bring the council into disrepute
- Post offensive language relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief
- Conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence

The council will allow members of the public to comment on their social media pages. Where comments are allowed, offensive comments or personal attacks will be removed. However, the council will always strive to encourage democratic debate. The council has the right to disable comments should online activity become hostile or constitute bullying or harassment. The use of offensive language relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or beliefs will not be tolerated and any activity that breaches any laws or regulations will be reported to the relevant authorities. The council has the right to remove any posts that are in breach of this policy.

Complaints

If a member of the public wishes to complain about anything the council or a councillor has posted on social media, they should refer to the council's complaints policy which

can be accessed by contacting the Clerk clerk@horsheath-pc.gov.uk or can be found on the Parish Council website. Complaints about Councillors will be managed in accordance with Code of Conduct procedures.

Essential Resources

Connected Councillors: A guide to using social media to support local leadership
(NALC Publication)