

# HULLAND WARD PARISH COUNCIL

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

### Aims:

The aim of this Policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to Hulland Ward Parish Councillors in the use of online communications, collectively referred to as social media, specifically the Hulland Ward Facebook Page.

The principles of the Policy apply to Parish Councillors and the Clerk. It is also intended for guidance for others communicating with the Parish Council. The policy sits alongside relevant existing policies which need to be taken into consideration. The use of social media is not to replace existing forms of communication. The Parish Council's website will remain the main media for the purpose of communicating information about the Parish Council. Other forms of social media will be used to enhance communication. Therefore, existing means of communication should continue with social media being an additional option. Aspects of the Members' Code of Conduct apply to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. Online content should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate. What you write on the web is permanent. In the main, councillors have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failures to comply with the law may have more serious consequences.

### Guidelines

Councillors should not use their own personal social media accounts when posting or commenting on posts with regard to Parish Council business or anything that may be construed as such.

Councillors using their own social media accounts or any other form of communication for community or other purposes do so as private individuals and should not use any privileged material gained from their position as a Parish Councillor

The Parish Clerk and nominated Councillor will be responsible for establishing and administering Parish Council social media accounts. Parish Council posts or comments on posts should only be made using the established Parish Council social media account.

Councillors wishing to utilise a Parish Council social media account should email the Parish Clerk with the proposed content and posting instructions with a copy to the Chairman and Vice Chairman. **Note** where possible posts should cross reference to the Parish Council website and provide the appropriate link. Once approved by either the Chairman or Vice Chairman, the nominated Councillor/Parish Clerk will make the post or comment as instructed.

The nominated Councillor/Parish Clerk may initiate posts or comments without prior approval for the purpose of circulating or responding with public domain information, public service notices and details from approved Parish Council minutes or on instructions from a full council meeting.

The Council will appoint a nominated councillor as "Webmaster" to maintain and update the Parish Council Facebook Page.

Individual Parish councillors are responsible for what they post. Councillors are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published e-mail address which is used for council business. Councillors are strongly advised to have separate council and personal email addresses.

### **Code of Practice**

Guidance when using social media (including email).

- All social media sites in use should be checked and updated on a regular basis and ensure that the security settings are in place.
- When participating in any online communication;
- As a Parish Council, we have a professional image to uphold and how we conduct ourselves online impacts this image
- Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent.
- Always disclose your identity and affiliation to the Parish Council. Never make false or misleading statements.
- Parish Councillors should not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment. All Parish Councillors need to be mindful of the information they post on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council or bring the Council into disrepute or is contrary to the Council's Code of Conduct or any other Policies.
- Keep the tone of your comments respectful and informative, never condescending or "loud." Use sentence case format, not capital letters, or write in red to emphasis points. Spell and grammar check everything. Correct any errors promptly.
- Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks. Language that may be deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age or religion or belief should not be published on any social media site.

- Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications. Never use an individual's name unless you have written permission to do so.
- Permission to publish photographs or videos on social media sites should be sought from the persons or organisations in the video or photograph before being uploaded.
- Respect the privacy of other councillors and residents.
- Do not post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations, see below libel and copyright.
- Social media and meetings:

**Review of policy**

The Policy will be reviewed at least every four years or earlier should legislation or practice require.