

## **BRYMPTON PARISH COUNCIL**

### **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

#### **1. Policy statement**

- 1.1. This policy is intended to help the Clerk to make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as emails, blogs, wikis, social networking websites, podcasts, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other relevant social media websites.

The council will encourage the use of social media for the purposes of:

- providing and exchanging information about services;
  - supporting local democracy;
  - gathering citizen insights and managing citizen relationships;
  - promoting cultural events or tourism for the area;
  - supporting community cohesion, neighbourliness and resilience; and
  - creating internal communications and learning and development.
- 1.2. This policy outlines the standards the council requires the Clerk to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which the council will monitor the use of social media and the action to be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.
- 1.3. This policy supplements, and should be read in conjunction with, all other policies and procedures adopted by the council.
- 1.4. This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

#### **2. Who is covered by this policy**

- 2.1. This policy covers the Clerk to the Council

#### **3. The scope of this policy**

- 3.1. The council has a corporate presence on the web and by use of email, which it uses to communicate with people who live in, work in and visit the parish. The council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications.

Over time the Parish Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur this Social Media Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

- 3.2. The Clerk is expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the reputation, privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the council, its services, employees, partners and community.
- 3.2. Serious breaches of this policy by the Clerk may be dealt with under the Employee Disciplinary Procedure. The council may take disciplinary action in respect of unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive comments by the Clerk.
- 3.3. This policy will be amended as necessary to suit the particular needs of Brympton Parish Council and will be re-visited annually to reflect any changes in the council's use of social media.

#### **4. Rules for using social media.**

- 4.1 The Clerk must not allow interaction on any websites or blogs to damage her working relationships with others. The Clerk must not make any derogatory, discriminatory, defamatory or offensive comments.
- 4.2 Posts must not contain anyone's personal information, other than necessary basic contact details
- 4.3 When using social media personally, the Clerk must not act, claim to act, or give the impression that she is acting as a representative of the council. The Clerk should not include web links to official council websites as this may give or reinforce the impression that she is representing the council.
- 4.4 The Clerk must ensure council facilities are used appropriately. If using a council-provided website, blog site or social networking area, any posts made will be viewed as made in an official capacity. Council facilities should not be used for personal or political blogs.
- 4.5 The Clerk will maintain and update the Parish Council Website. The website may be used to:
- Post notices and minutes of meetings
  - Advertise events and activities
  - Post news stories
  - Link to appropriate websites or press page if those sites meet the council's expectations of conduct
  - Advertise vacancies
  - Retweet or 'share' information from partners i. e. Police, Library, district council, etc.
  - Announce new information appropriate to the council.
  - Post or Share information promoting bodies for community benefit such as schools, Scouts, sports clubs and community groups
  - Post other items as the council see fit.
  - Facebook and/or Twitter, etc, may be used to support the website and its information as above.
- 4.6 All social media sites in use will be checked on a regular basis to ensure the security settings are in place.
- 4.9 When participating in online communication the Clerk must;
- Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent.
  - Always disclose her identity and affiliation to the council.
  - Never make false or misleading statements.
  - Not present herself in a way that might cause embarrassment. She must protect the good reputation of the council.
  - Be mindful of the information posted on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the council.
  - Keep the tone of comments respectful and informative, never condescending or "loud." Use sentence case format, not capital letters, do not write in red to emphasise points.
  - 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.
  - Not post comments that would not be made in writing or face to face.
  - Never name an individual third party unless written permission to do so is received.
  - Seek permission to publish original photographs or videos from the persons or organisations in the video or photograph before they are uploaded. The Clerk must check that there is parental permission before photos of children are used.
  - Respect the privacy of other councillors, staff, and residents.
  - The Clerk must never post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations, such as libel and copyright.
  - Spell and grammar check everything.
- 4.10 Residents and councillors should be aware that not all communication through social media requires a response, although an acknowledgement should be made if appropriate.
- 4.11 If a matter raised in any form of social media needs further consideration by the council it may be raised at either the open forum or as a full agenda item for consideration by a quorum of Councillors. The 'poster' shall be informed via the page or direct message that this is the case and invited to contact the clerk direct. Any response agreed by the council will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- 4.12 Reports of any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should be reported to the Chairman.

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