

BUTLERS MARSTON PARISH COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. About this policy

- 1.1 This policy is in place to assist Councillors to minimise the risk of being found to have breached the Councillors' Code of Conduct through their use of social media.
- 1.2 This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Wikipedia, Whisper, Instagram, Tumblr and all other social networking sites, internet postings and blogs. It applies to use of social media whenever you are acting in the capacity of a Councillor as well as personal use in your private capacity that may affect the Council in any way.

2. Prohibited use

- 2.1 You must never make any social media communications that could damage the Council's interests or reputation, even indirectly.
- 2.2 You must not use social media to defame or disparage the Council, other Councillors, the Council's staff or any third party.
- 2.3 You must not harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against other Councillors, the Council's staff or any third party.
- 2.4 You must not make false or misleading statements; or impersonate other Councillors, the Council's staff or any third party.
- 2.5 You must not do anything to jeopardise the Council's confidential information and intellectual property.

3. Guidelines for responsible use of social media

- 3.1 You must make it clear in social media postings, or in your profile, whenever you are speaking on your own behalf in your capacity as an elected representative of the Council.
- 3.2 You must be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that you are personally responsible for all communications (including posting or sharing images and sharing other content online) which will be published on the internet for anyone to see.
- 3.3 You must ensure that your profile and any content you post is consistent with your capacity as an elected representative of the Council.
- 3.4 If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, please refrain from posting it until you have discussed it with the Monitoring Officer.
- 3.5 If you see social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on the Council, other Councillors, the Council's staff or any third party, please contact the Monitoring Officer.

4. Guidance when communicating on behalf of the Council

- 4.1 When communicating on behalf of the Council, Councillors and the Clerk must be mindful of the information they discuss in both a personal and council capacity and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative following these guidelines:
 - i. **Clear** – all Council communication should be accessible, concise, informative and factual
 - ii. **Consistent** – communication through all channels should be consistent with the Council's position as identified in minutes and policies
 - iii. **Relevant** – based on fact, information, action or achievement and communicate in a useful and timely manner
 - iv. **Open** – communication should seek to promote the Council's activities through open and transparent communications whilst encouraging enquiries and feedback because the Council exists to represent the interest of its residents.

5. Social Media Guidance

- 5.1 When responding to Facebook posts, responses should be written with involvement of three Councillors (quorum).
- 5.2 Posts should always be relevant and should not exceed more than 2 per 5 days, unless there are exceptional circumstances, to avoid over posting and therefore diluting the impact of the Council's post. Scheduling or staggering communications would always be better.
- 5.3 Occasionally, we may receive inappropriate comments. Councillors should consider comments on a case by case basis and may decide whether:
 - i. the post requires a response
 - ii. to respond online either in public or via another channel
 - iii. to direct the post to different means of communication with the Council or another organisation
 - iv. it is necessary to remove the post if it is deemed inappropriate

6. Breach of this policy

Breach of this policy may be a breach of the Code of Conduct.