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# Social Media Policy



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Slinfold Parish  
Council

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Approved July 2017  
Still correct at August 2020

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# Social Media Policy

## **Introduction**

The use of digital and social media now has a clear and compelling impact on all areas of local government enabling better and more direct contact between the Parish Council, the people and businesses it serves and the agencies that it works with.

Social media provides an alternative channel (to written correspondence, telephone and face to face conversation) for the Parish Council to inform and respond to questions and queries raised by people who live in, work in and visit Slinfold parish. It can also enable the Parish Council to deal more efficiently with the various agencies (e.g. the surrounding parishes, district council and the county council) that deliver services to local people.

The policy is intended to provide guidance to council staff, parish councillors, volunteers and others who engage with the council using online communications, collectively referred to as social media. The principles of the policy apply to staff, councillors, in certain circumstances volunteers and to others communicating with the Parish Council.

## **What is Social Media**

Social media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Prominent examples are:

- [Facebook](#) is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. According to statistics from the Nielsen Group, Internet users within the United States spend more time on Facebook than any other website.
- [Twitter](#) is a free microblogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices.

The policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include, but are not limited to:

- Parish Council website and email;
- Facebook, Myspace and other social networking sites;
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites;
- YouTube and other video clips and podcast site;
- LinkedIn;
- Blogs and discussion forums;

The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication.

## **The Social Media Policy**

This Social Media policy aims to describe how the Parish Council will use social media to improve and expand the ways in which it communicates with its residents,

local businesses and the various government (local and central) agencies that it deals with. The Parish Council has a corporate presence on the web and an email channel which it uses to communicate with people who live in, work in and visit Slinfold parish.

The Parish Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. We may ask those who contact us for their preferred channel of communication when we deal with them.

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, the policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements as appropriate.

## **Channels and Responsibilities**

### **Parish Council website**

Our website is hosted by Vision ICT and is normally continuously available. The Parish Council will maintain one website [www.slinfold-pc.gov.uk](http://www.slinfold-pc.gov.uk) The Clerk is responsible for publishing content to the website.

Where necessary, we may direct those contacting us to our website to see the required information, or we may forward their question to one of our Parish Councillors for consideration and response. We may not respond to every comment we receive particularly if we are experiencing a heavy workload or if it does not meet with our rules and expectation.

The Parish Council may, at its discretion, allow and enable approved local groups to have and maintain a presence on its website for presenting information about the group's activities. The local group would be responsible for maintaining the content and ensuring that it meets the Parish Council's "rules and expectation" (see previous page) for the website. The Parish Council reserves the right to remove any or all a local group's information from the website.

Where content on the web site is maintained by a local group it should be clearly marked that such content is not the direct responsibility of the Parish Council.

### **Parish Council email**

Our email account is monitored mainly during office hours, Tuesday – Thursday, 10am till 4pm and we aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as we can and within 5 working days. The Parish Council will maintain one email address for direct contact currently it is [clerk@slinfold-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@slinfold-pc.gov.uk)

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and passing it on to the relevant person or external agency to deal with.

The recognised procedure for the sending of emails from the Parish Council to residents, businesses and organisations is that they will be sent by the Clerk. Where Parish Councillors need to communicate with residents, businesses and organisations they should, preferably, keep to the recognised procedure by sending their email to the Clerk. Where for reasons of expediency this is not practical the

email concerned must be copied to the Clerk. This procedure was adopted to ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

### **Parish Council Facebook page**

Currently the Parish Council does not operate its own Facebook page but may post to the Slinfold Parish Facebook page.

### **Parish Council Twitter channel**

Currently the Parish Council does not operate a Twitter account.

### **Our rules and expectation**

Most online communities have their own rules and guidelines, which we will always abide by. We promise that any communications (this includes all content on the Parish Council's website) from the Parish Council will meet the following criteria:

- be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- not contain content that is unlawful, libelous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;
- will be moderated by the Clerk or a nominated representative;
- Social Media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

Equally, we expect any communications to the Parish Council to meet these criteria.

### **Council Use of Social Media**

Social media may be used to:

- Distribute agendas, post minutes and dates of meetings;
- Publish information about the work of the Parish Council to include newsletters;
- Advertise events and activities and log the same;
- Publish good news stories, linked website or press pages;
- Advertise council vacancies;
- Share information from partner related community groups such as schools, sports clubs, community groups and charities;
- Share information from other councils (parish, district and county);
- Refer resident queries to the Clerk, other staff and councillors.

### **Using Social Media sites in our name**

Only the Parish Clerk and nominated volunteers (as approved by the Parish Clerk/Council) are permitted to post material on social media in the council's name and on our behalf.

### **Internal communication and access to information within the Parish Council**

As more and more information becomes available "at the press of a button" it is vital that all information is treated sensitively and securely. Parish Councillors are expected to maintain an awareness of the confidentiality of all information that they have access to and not to share that information with anyone unless they are sure that it is reasonable to do so. The current Code of Conduct applies to online activity in the same way as it does to other written or verbal communications. Individual staff, Parish Councillors and volunteers are expected to always comply with this

policy to protect the privacy, confidentiality and interests of our council and are responsible for what they post in a council capacity.

**Rules for Use of Social Media**

Whenever you are permitted to use social media, in accordance with this policy, you must adhere to the following general rules:

- No information should be published that is not already in the public domain, e.g. already available on the Council’s website. If uploading, posting or forwarding content or including a link, ensure you have consent to do so;
- When you do make a reference, link back to the source where possible;
- Information should be factual, fair, thorough and transparent;
- Be mindful that this information may stay in the public domain ad infinitum.
- Respect copyright laws;
- Do not publish anything that would not be acceptable in the workplace;
- Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal or confidential information. If unsure discuss with the Clerk/Chairman;
- Any employee, volunteer or member who feels that they have been harassed, bullied or offended by the material posted should inform the Clerk and/or the Chairman;
- Remember that you are an ambassador for the Council and be cordial at all times.

**Monitoring the Use of Social Media and Review of this Policy**

- Misuse of social media can in certain circumstances constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and us. Breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary procedures against employees or result in action being taken against council members who are in breach of the Code of Conduct;
- If you notice any use of social media in breach of this policy please refer it to the Clerk/Chairman;
- The Clerk shall be responsible for reviewing this policy from time to time to ensure it reflects best practice.

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Policy first draft issued	28 June 2017	The Clerk prepared the first draft
Policy second draft issued	July 2018	Circulated to council
Policy approved	July 2018	At the PC meeting July 2018
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Policy Reviewed		