

BICKLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

The Woolwell Centre, Darklake Lane, Woolwell, PL6 7TR

Telephone 07508 324699

E-Mail: parishclerk@bickleigh.gov.uk

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SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Policy Statement

This policy is intended to help employees including clerks, RFO's, and administrators make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as blogs, social networking websites, forums, message boards, or comments on web articles, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn or Instagram.

This policy outlines the standards we require employees and Councillors to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which we will monitor use of social media and the action we will take in respect of breaches of this policy.

This policy supplements any other Council policy which states the use of the internet.

The scope of the policy

All employees and Councillors are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality and interests of our council.

Breach of this policy by employees or Councillors may be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct. This may lead to dismissal for employees and a referral to the South Hams District Council Monitoring Officer for Parish Councillors.

Responsibility for implementation of the Policy

The Clerk has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.

The Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise the risk to our work.

All employees and Councillors should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the Chairman the Parish Council.

Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Clerk of the Council.

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Using social medial sites in our name

Only the Clerk and Parish Councillors who have received authorisation are permitted to post material on a social media website in the council's name and on our behalf.

Using social media

We recognise the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about our council and community. We also recognise the importance of our employees and Councillors joining in and helping shape local government conversation and direction through interaction in social media.

Before using social media on any matter which might affect the interests of the council you must:

- Have read and understood this policy.
- Employees and Councillors must have sought and gained prior approval to do so from the Chairman of the Council.

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:

- i. Do not upload, post or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.
- ii. Any employee or Parish Councillor who feels that they have been harassed or bullied or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform the Chairman of the council.
- iii. Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls into one of these categories, you should discuss this with the Clerk or the Chairman of the council.
- iv. Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.
- v. Before you include a link to a third-party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit you to link to it.

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- vi. When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.
- vii. Be honest and open but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the council.
- viii. You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools.
- ix. Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.
- x. Do not discuss employees without their prior approval.
- xi. Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion.
- xii. Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact details.

Monitoring use of social media websites

Employees should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for council purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken.

Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and us.

In particular a serious case of uploading, posting forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will probably amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):

- i. Pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);
- ii. A false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;
- iii. Material that is offensive, obscene;
- iv. Criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the council;
- v. Confidential information about the council or anyone else;

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- vi. Any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for you or the council); or
- vii. Material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.
- viii. No postings from the Bickleigh Parish Council's facebook page shall be shared by the Clerk or any Councillor onto other Facebook pages.

Any such action will be addressed under the council's disciplinary procedure and/or complaints procedure.

Where evidence of misuse is found the Parish Council may undertake a more detailed investigation under advisement of the District Council Legal Monitoring Team. This may involve the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or managers involved in the investigation. If necessary, such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.

If you notice any use of social media by other employees or Councillors in breach of this policy please report it to the Clerk or Chairman of the council.

Monitoring and review of this policy

The Clerk shall be responsible for reviewing this policy annually to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.