

Social Media Policy

This policy was formally adopted by

St Cleer Parish Council

on

23.10.2024

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St Cleer Parish Council Social Media Policy

General Outline

St Cleer Parish Council is:

- a) Keen to embrace the opportunity to engage with the community better and recognises social media is a powerful platform in which to reach a large number of Electors
- b) using social media to proactively engage with the community but will, where appropriate attempt to use Social Media to manage exigent circumstances
- c) aware that Councillors and Electors may choose to record / post from meetings, and requests that Councillors do this overtly. No recording /posting can be made of restricted items. Guidance is appended at Appendix 2
- d) committed to fair and equal treatment of 'reporters' balanced against a commitment to protecting vulnerable persons and those who do not want to be filmed / recorded. The notice at Appendix 3 will be displayed at all meetings
- f) committed to councillors being informed decision-makers, as a result Social Media will be:
 - permitted so that business can be conducted without disruption
 - managed so that vexatious or disruptive conduct will not be tolerated

1. Policy statement

1.1. This policy is intended to help employees including clerks, RFO's, Executive Officers, part-time, fixed-term and casual employees (collectively referred to as employees in this policy), volunteers and members make appropriate decisions about the use of all social media such as blogs, social networking websites, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram, including those developed subsequent to this policy. Guidance is Appended at Appendix 1

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

1.3. This policy supplements The Code of Conduct, Officer Member Protocol and Standing Orders and Transparency Policy.

2. Responsibility for implementation of the policy

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

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

2.3. All Councillors and employees should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any breach of this policy should be reported to The Parish Clerk, or if the complaint relates to the Clerk, to the Chair

2.4. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to The Parish Clerk

3. The scope of the policy

3.1. All Councillors and employees are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of our council; and the confidence that the electorate put into the Council

3.2. Breach of this policy by employees may be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.

3.3. Breach of this policy by Councillors may be dealt with under Code of Conduct and, in serious cases, may be treated as a breach leading to censure. This will include working with Social Media Providers to enable this as required.

4. Using social media sites in our name

4.1. Only the Parish Clerk and Councillors with Delegated Authority are permitted to post material on a social media website in the council's name and on our behalf.

4.2. Any media site which is named referring to St Cleer Parish Council or Councillors or Councillors Group are defined as using Social Media in our name.

4.3. Councillors are encouraged to connect with the electorate but must, for transparency, do so in their own name, making clear that their views are their own.

5. Using social media

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

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

- a) have read and understood this policy and the others named in 1.3 above, and
- b) Councillors and employees must have sought and gained prior delegated authority to do so by Resolution of the Council

6. 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:

6.1. Do not upload, post or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.

6.2. Moderators are to hide content deemed inappropriate, offensive, or not in good taste. If no appeal is received within 7 days via email to the council at clerk@stcleerparishcouncil.gov.uk, the comments may be then deleted

6.3. Any employee, volunteer or member who feels that they have been harassed or bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded onto a social media website should inform The Parish Clerk or the Chair

6.4. Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with The Parish Clerk / 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.

- 6.5.** Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.
- 6.6.** 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.
- 6.7.** When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.
- 6.8.** Be honest and open but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the council.
- 6.9.** You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools.
- 6.10.** Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.
- 6.11.** Don't discuss employees without their prior approval.
- 6.12.** Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion.

7. Social media at meetings

7.1 A notice will be posted at the entrance to the meeting so that people are aware that:

- a) Filming and other reporting might take place at the meeting
- b) That they should alert the chair before the meeting if they would like a request to be made that they are not filmed etc and so that they can be directed to the best place to sit to try to avoid being filmed
- c) The Council will display the requirements as to filming, recording and broadcasting at its meeting venues and those undertaking these activities will be deemed to have accepted them whether they have read them or not.

7.2 The Chairman should have a standard statement made at the outset of all meetings in order to alert the public to:

- a) Filming and other reporting might take place at the meeting
- b) That they should alert the chair immediately if they would like a request to be made that they are not filmed etc and so that they can be directed to the best place to sit to try to avoid being filmed
- c) That vulnerable persons (children etc) should be identified and can also sit in a no film/photograph area and must only be filmed or otherwise reported where the relevant responsible adult has given permission.
- d) That filming and other reporting is welcome but should not disrupt the meeting and cannot occur where meetings are closed to the public for confidential items.

7.3 All councillors, the clerk and any other staff participating in meetings, should be aware that there could be reporting, including filming, at meetings. Each person, whilst wishing to behave naturally and without inhibiting important debate, will wish to carefully consider their own conduct and how they might appear through the eye of a lens throughout the meeting. Never forget that cameras or audio recording equipment might still be running before and after the meeting. Even though the right to report specifically relates to the meeting itself, it will be hard to prevent any additional reporting and could look obstructive in the absence of any illegal acts taking place. Also, even where someone might overstep the line, for example, when it comes to running the risk of a potential defamation claim, it can be difficult to prevent publication or require its removal and judicious conduct is important to minimise the opportunities for vexatious editing.

8.4 The Council asks those recording proceedings not to edit the film or recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings or infringe the core values of the Council. This includes

refraining from editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule or show lack of respect towards those being filmed or recorded

8. Libel and Slander

8.1 Libel and slander has become more important in recent years with the increased use of e-mail and social media. For example, a verbal or written comment made by the local council/councillor which a member of the public considers to be both incorrect and damaging and which causes financial loss. For instance, a derogatory comment by a councillor in an e-mail or recorded at a council meeting about a local tradesman / contractor could lead to a compensation claim for loss of business as a result of the comments.

8.2 Therefore it is important that councillors do not make damaging statements in any meeting, e-mail correspondence or on social media platforms, especially as these trails are often circulated and forwarded on to others.

Guidance from 'How to Digital Innovation'

Posting on Facebook

A post can be a picture, a video, a link or just some text.

There has been a lot of research into what makes a great Facebook post and here are some helpful hints:

- Keep it short. People are usually skim reading on Facebook as they scroll down the page. Don't make it hard for them.
- Ask a question. Social media is meant to be... social. So, ask for opinions and advice.
- Include pictures. Most of your posts should include images. People react better to posts that catch the eye.
- Include a link to further information. As much as possible, you want to be directing people to your website.
- Keep it positive. Although you might have frustrating occasions as your project progresses, it is better to keep social media posts light, as they are more likely to get a reaction.

Audience Interaction

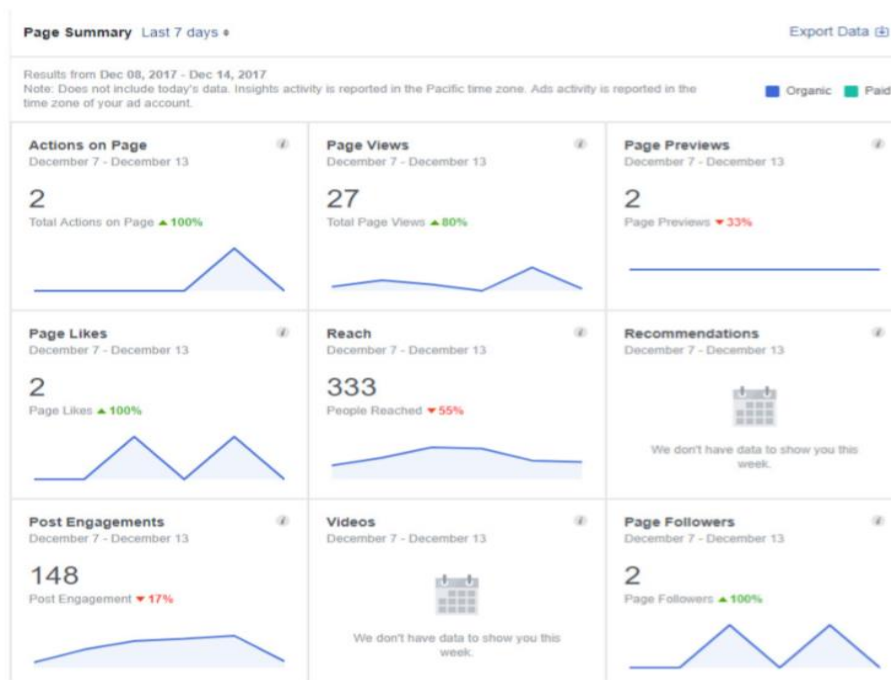
What you want is for people to react to your post, send you a message, or like what you have said. The more likes, shares and comments you get, the more likely your message is to be seen by friends of those who are interacting with you.

Facebook Messages

You can set up an auto reply, acknowledging the message and letting people know that you will get back to them, or suggesting an alternative way of contacting you.

Measuring your Facebook Success – Insights

If you want to find out how well your Facebook posts are doing you can click on the Insights tab in your page menu bar. This will enable you to plan posts that get the best reaction. If people are liking more video posts, or commenting on a question posts with pictures, start doing more of them.



How often to post?

Because of the way that people use Facebook, and the way that Facebook have created their platform, it's best to post once or at most twice a day. This gives you the best chance of appearing in someone's feed.

What not to do on Social Media Channels

The following tips can be applied to any social media channel that you decide to use for your heritage regeneration project.

- Link Social Media accounts

It might be tempting to link your social media accounts so that if you post on twitter it also appears on Facebook, for example. But different platforms post in different ways so it doesn't look right. People who follow you also find this annoying.

- Get into arguments

Heritage regeneration projects can be quite emotional, so you might have to deal with negative comments. Respond to these if you can and they are constructive. If you are dealing with unhelpful abuse you can hide the comment from other users so that it doesn't become an online fight.

- Disappear

Don't post for a week and then not write anything until you are requesting donations for your crowdfunding campaign. Regularity is important to those who are following you on social media platforms so decide how much time you can invest and keep it up. Once a week is better than not at all.

- Waste time

One of the reasons people get frustrated with social media is that they feel it's not productive. The best way to get the most out of it is to plan ahead and schedule - don't sit there for 45 minutes composing one tweet. Remember you can use the same pictures, videos or messages on different channels.

- Buy followers

Some consider buying a large number of followers to boost the look of their account. But these followers rarely provide opportunities for actual engagement. The meaningless rise in numbers may look good, but risks you seeming disingenuous to potential followers, reducing your reputation.

Further Info

<http://www.smallcharities.org.uk/resources-social-media/>

<https://knowhownonprofit.org/campaigns/communications/socialmedia>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/production/online/social-media/article/art20130702112136115>

https://brick-work.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/How-To-Digital-Innovation_Final.pdf

Accessed on 30.05.2018

Guidelines for broadcasting or using Social Media at Council meetings

The right to record, film and to broadcast meetings of the Council, Committees and Sub Committees is established following the Local Government Audit and Accountability Act 2014. This is in addition to the rights of the press and public to attend such meetings.

1. The Council will make the Council chamber available to the public 15 minutes before and after meetings for the setting up and removal of any filming equipment.
2. Members of the public are permitted to film or record meetings to which they are permitted access, in a non-disruptive manner and only from public areas.
3. Meetings or parts of meetings from which the press and public are excluded may not be filmed or recorded.
4. The use of digital and social media recording tools, for example Twitter, blogging or audio recording will be allowed as long as it is carried out in a non-disruptive manner.
5. Councillors who choose to use social media during Council meetings must refrain from disrupting other Councillors and Council debate.
6. Councillors who choose to record, film or broadcast meetings including the use of social media are reminded of their responsibilities under the Council's Code of Conduct including the confidentiality requirements.
7. While those attending meetings are deemed to have consented to the filming, recording or broadcasting of meetings, those exercising the rights to film, record and broadcast must respect the rights of other people attending under the Data Protection Act 1998.
8. The Chairman of the meeting, or any such Council representative as designated by the Chairman, has the authority to stop a meeting and take appropriate action if any person contravenes these principles or is deemed to be recording in a disruptive manner.
9. Any person or organisation choosing to film, record or broadcast any meeting of the Council is responsible for any claims or other liability resulting from them so doing and by choosing to film, record or broadcast proceedings they accept that they are required to indemnify the Council, its members and officers in relation to any such claims or liabilities.
10. The Council asks those recording proceedings not to edit the film or recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings or infringe the core values of the Council. This includes refraining from editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule or show lack of respect towards those being filmed or recorded.
11. The Council will display the requirements as to filming, recording and broadcasting at its meeting venues and those undertaking these activities will be deemed to have accepted them whether they have read them or not.
12. The Council will advertise that all meetings are held in public and could be filmed or recorded by broadcasters, the media or members of the public.
13. The Council will publish the guidance on the filming, recording and broadcasting of meetings on its website.

St Cleer Parish Council**RECORDING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS****Please Note:**

This meeting has been advertised as a public meeting and as such could be filmed or recorded by broadcasters, the media or members of the public.

Please be aware that whilst every effort is taken to ensure that members of the public are not filmed, we cannot guarantee this, especially if you are speaking or taking an active role.

If you have any concerns about how this may impact on you as an individual or you wish to request that you are not filmed or recorded it is your responsibility to discuss this with the chair before the meeting

2018

St Cleer Parish Council

I _____

Being a member of St Cleer Parish Council, acknowledge receipt of the Social Media Policy effective from _____ 2024

and agreed to adhere to the provisions of this Policy

Signed _____

Date _____

Received by Clerk

Signed _____

Date _____