

PURTON PARISH COUNCIL	SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY
APPROVED BY COUNCIL:/...../..... <i>This policy will be reviewed once every 5 years unless there is a significant change in legislation or staffing requirements</i>	
Signed by Clerk:	Dated:

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of digital and social media now enables better and more direct contact between Purton Parish Council, parishioners and businesses it serves and the agencies it works and liaises with. Social media is a collective term for the ways to create and publish information via the internet and for the purpose of this policy refers to the Parish Council website, Facebook page and Twitter only.

This policy details how Purton Parish Council will use social media to improve and expand the ways in which it communicates with its local residents, local businesses and various government agencies it deals with.

Social media provides an alternative channel to written correspondence, telephone and face to face conversation to enable the Parish Council to inform and respond to questions and queries raised by people who live in, work in and visit the parish. It also enables the Parish Council to deal more efficiently with the various agencies that deliver services to local people. Use of digital and social media will form an integral part of how the Parish Council delivers its services in a way that improves communication between the Parish Council and the people, businesses and agencies it serves and works with.

Purton Parish Council has a website and an e-mail channel which it uses to communicate with residents, as well as those working in and visiting the Parish. The Parish Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications and the Clerk and/or Members may ask for a preferred channel of communication. 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 Social Media, Policy will be updated.

Councillors are not permitted to detail on their own Facebook account and/or a Facebook account created specifically for Council related business information of the Council and/or their own personal views without clearing the content via the Councils responsible Press and Media representative, the Clerk.

3. SOCIAL MEDIA

All communications from Purton Parish Council will meet the following criteria: -

- Be civil respectful and relevant
- Not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing. Defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive
- Nor contain content copied from elsewhere for which it does not own the copyright
- Not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details
- Will be moderated by the Clerk to the Parish Council
- Will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising

All communications to the Parish Council will meet the following criteria:

- Be civil, respectful and relevant

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- Not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing. Defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive
- Not contain content copied from elsewhere. For which the enquirer does not own the copyright
- Not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details
- Will not seek to disseminate any political advertising

The Clerk to the Council is responsible for approving and arranging publication of content to the website, Twitter and Facebook page via other Staff members. On occasion requests for information may be forwarded to a Member(s) for their consideration and response, which will then be directed back via the Clerk to the Council.

4. FACEBOOK

The Parish Council may choose to respond to a comment received, particularly if one response can be considered to address all. The Parish Council may permit local organisations to maintain a presence on its Facebook page, subject to the adherence of the criteria detailed above.

The Clerk to the Council reserves the right to remove any information considered in breach of the above. It should be clearly identified that such information and its content is not the direct responsibility of the Parish Council.

Facebook Strategy Social networks are rapidly growing in popularity and are used by all ages in society. The most popular social networks are web-based, commercial and not purposely designed for Parish Council use. They include sites like Facebook, MySpace, Bebo, and Xanga. For individuals, social networking sites provide tremendous opportunities for staying in touch with friends and family. For the Council the sites provide a modern alternative means to communicate with residents of the Parish.

Facebook, for example, offers a rich platform allowing you to share unlimited content, including images and videos. Example activity:

- Share articles / blog posts / expertise
- Start discussions and ask questions to encourage interaction
- Create surveys to encourage participation from visitors
- Upload images and videos
- Generic news – what’s happening in the area

One of the hallmarks of online networks is the ability to “friend” others, creating a group of others that share interests and personal news. Care should be exercised when accepting invitations to friend others within personal social networking sites. Friends will gain access to the Council’s network of contacts on the site.

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Good practice guidelines for the use of Facebook by the Council as a body or Councillors as individuals are:

- As a Parish Council, we have a professional image to uphold and how we conduct ourselves online impacts this image.
- Remember that people classified as “friends” have the ability to download and share your information with others.
- Post only what you want the world to see. It is not like posting something to your web site or blog and then realizing that a story or photo should be taken down. On a social networking site, basically once you post something it may continue to be available, even after it is removed from the site.
- Do not disclose confidential matters or criticise Council policies or personnel.
- Set your profile’s security and privacy settings carefully. At a minimum, all privacy settings should be set to “only friends”. “Friends of friends” and “Networks and Friends” open the content to a large group of unknown people.
- Do not post images that include young people without parental permission.
- Pay close attention to the site's security settings and allow only approved personnel full access to the site.
- Only add statements approved by either Full Council or the Parish Clerk.
- Do not use commentary deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libellous. Exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colourful language, guesswork, obscenity, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions, and derogatory remarks or characterizations.
- Weigh whether a particular posting puts your effectiveness at Purton Parish Council at risk.
- To reduce security risks, do not install any external applications that work with the social networking site. Examples of these sites are calendar programs and games.
- Maintain updated anti-virus and malware protection to avoid infections of spyware and adware that social networking sites might place on your computer.
- Be careful not to fall for phishing scams that arrive via email or on your wall, providing a link for you to click, leading to a fake login page.
- If you find information on the social networking site that falls under the mandatory reporting guidelines then you must report it as required by law.
- Please stay informed and cautious in the use of all new networking technologies.

5. TWITTER

The Parish Council may choose to re-tweet comments that mention the Parish Council. The Parish Clerk and Deputy Clerk are the only personnel who have access to this account. The Clerk is the only person who has authority for items to be tweeted.

6. WEBSITE

The Parish Council’s website is an integral part of the Parish Council. Its purpose is to communicate with residents, local clubs, societies and organisations as well as external bodies including Wiltshire Council and Local and/or Central Government organisations.

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The Parish Council will aim to ensure that all information within the website is up to date and relevant.

The following items may be included: -

- Information on village clubs, societies and organisations and events
- Links to the following external websites
 - o Wiltshire Council
 - o Links to approved charities (as requested) –
 - o Parish Council agendas - Parish Council minutes
 - o Parish Council committee’s minutes
 - o Parish Council Financial Information as permitted under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (as amended)
 - o Parish Council policies and Procedures
 - o Parish Council members information

Other items may be included at the Clerk’s discretion, and any items for publication on the website should be emailed to the Clerk to the Council at clerk@purtonpc.eclipse.co.uk.

The following will NOT be included: -

- Articles affiliated to, or promoting any political organisation
- Commercial advertisements
- Publicity for any non-charitable fund-raising event

Users must ensure that they use social media sensibly and responsibly, and ensure that its use will not adversely affect the Council or its business, nor be damaging to the Council's reputation and credibility or otherwise violate any Council policies.

7. STANDARDS TO BE FOLLOWED

The following guidelines will apply to online participation and set out the standards of behaviour expected as a representative of Purton Parish Council:

- Be aware of and recognise your responsibilities identified in the Social Media Policy.
- Remember that you are personally responsible for the content you publish on any form of social media.
- Never give out personal details of others such as home address and telephone numbers.
- Ensure that you handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the Data Protection Act.
- Use a disclaimer. When using social media for personal purposes, you must not imply you are speaking for the Council. Avoid use of the Council e-mail address, logos or other Council identification. Make it clear that what you say is representative of your personal views only.

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Where possible, you should include a standard disclaimer, such as: "Statements and opinions here are my own and don't necessarily represent the Council's policies or opinions".

- Know your obligations: you must comply with other Council policies when using social media. For example, you should be careful not to breach Council confidentiality and proprietary information policies.
- Show respect to all. You should be respectful of the authority and employees. Derogatory comments are always wrong.
- Use of the Parish Council's Facebook account must always reflect the Council's position/decisions on a matter and in no circumstances, must it be used to express personal opinion, particularly when used by a Councillor. If unsure, say nothing.

Councillors are at liberty to set up accounts using any of the tools available but should ensure they are clearly identified as personal and do not in any way imply that they reflect the Council's view. Councillors should at all times present a professional image and not disclose anything of a confidential nature. Comments of a derogatory, proprietary or libellous nature should not be made and care should be taken to avoid guesswork, exaggeration and colourful language.

The Clerk to the Council and Councillors will treat all information confidentially, securely and sensitively. Failure to observe this may be seen as a breach of the Parish Councils Code of Conduct and dealt with through its prescribed procedures.

Emails: Purton Parish Council maintains several email addresses which are all reviewed by the Clerk internally.

The Clerk to the Council is responsible for publicity, press and advertisement through all social media channels.

Review Date	Review Detail
9 th November 2015	New policy adopted (Council meeting 9-11-15)
8 th January 2017	Changes to items 4 and 7 to include personal use by councillors
8 th November 2021	No updates or changes required.