

# **MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL**

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

### **Index**

1	Social Media Policy	2
2	Why are the Parish Council using social media?	2
3	Use of Official Accounts	2
4	Limits on their use	2
5	Facebook	3
6	Twitter	3
7	Social media moderation policy	3
8	Personal Accounts on Social Media	4
9	Further Rules and Review	4

**Meeting adopted**

**3 August 2021**

**Next review**

**August 2024 unless required earlier**

## **1. Social Media Policy**

- a) The Parish Council realise that social media and networking websites have become a regular part of everyday life and that many people enjoy membership of sites such as Facebook and Twitter. This policy is to provide councillors with guidelines on responsible use.

## **2. Why are the Parish Council using social media**

- a) The Parish Council's aim is to inform members of the community and the wider local area, through as many communication channels as practical, about what is happening within the Parish and local area and share important news and information.
- b) The Parish Council's social media channels supplement the information published on our website.
- c) The Parish Council can remind people of important events and alert followers to breaking news.
- d) The Parish Council can link to interesting and useful information about the Parish and local area published by others.
- e) The Parish Council can better communicate with those using mobile devices by using social media.

## **3. Use of Official Accounts**

- a) The Parish Council operates Facebook and Twitter accounts for the promotion of activities and events and as a communication and broadcast tool. Examples of acceptable corporate content are:
  - i) marketing campaigns;
  - ii) consultation documents;
  - iii) news feed & emergency information;
  - iv) event listings;
  - v) key dates;
  - vi) quick comments on hot topics and relevant news;
  - vii) polls and information gathering; and
  - viii) useful/helpful links.

## **4. Limits on their use**

- a) An official account on any social media website may only be set-up with consent from the Parish Council. Only authorised councillors or the Clerk may use these accounts to post online and access to the account is strictly limited. All information published on the internet must comply with the Parish Council's policies on data protection.

- b) Social media accounts will primarily be used to promote positive and important news and information within the Parish, supplementing content already published on the Parish Council's website. Councillors and/or any member of the public who becomes aware of social networking activity that could be in breach of the standards applied under 7. Social media moderation policy should make the Clerk aware as soon as possible.

## **5. Facebook**

- a) Facebook posts are used to highlight news, make announcements, provide an alternative method for engaging with the community and share information. Comments posted on and messages received on the Facebook page are views of individuals and do not represent the views of the Parish Council. Requests for something to be posted on the Parish Council's Facebook page or any complaints/issues with respect to Facebook should be directed to the Clerk.

## **6. Twitter**

- a) If you follow the Parish Council on Twitter, you can expect regular tweets covering: news and press releases; statements; retweets of notable announcements; Information reposted by East Herts Council or Hertfordshire County Council. If the Parish Council follows or is followed by another Twitter account, this does not imply any kind of support or endorsement. The Parish Council will reactively manage all @ messages and re-tweet upon occasion where felt applicable. The Parish Council will not normally reply to direct messages. The limitations of characters within Twitter's format means that the Parish Council would not be able to give a full and useful reply.
- b) The Parish Council, therefore, ask that in these instances contact is made with the Parish Council using the email address as posted on the Parish Council website. All tweets must be: timely and appropriate; mindful of the audience; accurate without any spelling mistakes or typos; factually correct and void of personal opinion; concise and not designed to promote a discussion/debate; and finally, comply with the Parish Council's policies on data protection. Any complaints/issues raised on Twitter should be reported to the Clerk.

## **7. Social media moderation policy**

- a) The Parish Council Facebook page is reactively moderated. The Parish Council cannot accept responsibility for the content of any comment posted at any time. The Parish Council reserve the right to remove comments received on Facebook and Twitter that: contain abusive, obscene, indecent or offensive language, or link to obscene or offensive material, contain swear words or other sorts of profanity, are completely removed from the topic of conversation or are not relevant to the item posted on the wall.
- b) Additionally, any comments or posts which contain abusive language towards an individual involved in the thread and/or other individuals or organisations will be removed. Items which constitute spam or promote or advertise local companies and/or their products, except where it is for a specific local event will be removed as well. Information about locating and sharing knowledge and expertise is

welcomed, but within the specific discussion. For serious and/or persistent breaches of the moderation policy, the Parish Council reserves the right to temporarily or permanently block and/or prevent users from posting further comments.

## **8. Personal Accounts on Social Media**

- a) Councillors need to use social networking in a way that does not conflict with their role and responsibilities as members of the Parish Council. The absence of, or lack of, explicit reference to a specific website or service does not limit the extent of the application of this policy. Where no policy or guidelines exist, councillors should use their judgment and always settle on the most prudent action possible. If the Parish Council is referred to in a way that is deemed defamatory or confidential information is disclosed, the Parish Council reserves the right to report the comment and request that it be removed.
- b) Councillors are at liberty to set up personal social media 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 Parish Council's view. Councillors should always uphold high standards of conduct and not disclose anything of a confidential nature. Comments of a derogatory, proprietary or libellous nature should not be made on personal social media accounts and care should be taken to avoid guesswork, exaggeration and colourful language.
- c) The Parish Council's Code of Conduct applies to social media communication.

## **9. Further Rules and Review**

- a) The Parish Council may monitor forums and blogs to gain indirect feedback. The Parish Council may post replies on forums or blogs to answer queries or address factual corrections but would generally take a cautious approach before getting involved in contentious issues. The Parish Council reserves the right to take any necessary steps to protect members of the Parish community and will delete any comments referencing the Parish Council or individual councillors, which are deemed abusive or offensive in any way.
- b) This Social Media Policy has been specifically developed in relation to Parish Councillors' activity on social media. It will be reviewed periodically and/or as appropriate to assess its effectiveness or if required by law.
- c) Any questions on this Policy and/or its' implementation should be addressed to the Clerk.