

Frampton Cotterell Parish Council

Social Media Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy covers the use of social media, including social networking websites such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube, content communities and blogs.

1.2 The policy aims to ensure that the council and its employees are protected when using social media.

1.3 Online behaviour should not differ from offline behaviour, specifically when reference is made to the council in any context. Users of social media and other websites must realise that what is published has the potential to be accessed for many years, even after the original content has been removed. The Computer Misuse Act 1990 introduced 3 criminal offences: unauthorised access; unauthorised access with intent to commit a serious offence; and unauthorised modification of computer material.

1.4 This policy must be complied with, if not disciplinary action may be taken which could ultimately result in dismissal and in reference to the Members Code of Conduct.

2. Scope

The Social Media Policy applies to all employees, members, casuals and volunteers of Frampton Cotterell Parish Council.

3. Social media in work

3.1 The council encourages interaction with its residents, partner agencies and community groups. If using social media for this purpose act responsibly, respectfully and ensure information is accurate. Remember you are representing the council so be aware of the image you are presenting. All council owned social media accounts and posts should be approved and monitored by the Clerk and Staffing Working Group/Committee. Accounts remain under the ownership of the Council at all times.

3.2 Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any other council policies or expected standards of behaviour at work.

3.3. Use extreme caution if disclosing any personal information, as this could lead to identity theft, etc.

3.4 Abide by copyright and data protection legislation.

3.5 If you break the law online you will be personally responsible.

3.6 If you are approached by the media regarding any content you have published, you must not respond until you have consulted the Clerk.

3.7 Use social media positively to project a good image. It is a powerful tool which can be hugely beneficial and provides valuable opportunities to do this. The use of social media should not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content and must not interfere with council employee's duties or performance.

3.8 Employees, members or volunteers may be required to remove content which is considered to breach this policy and any information that will bring the council into disrepute is not to be discussed, referred to or stated on any internet website or any other social media channel.

3.9 References must not be provided for employees (current or previous employees) on social networking sites as they may be attributed to the council and create a liability for both the content author and the council. Internet searches carried out for the formal assessment of candidates for recruitment are not permitted.

3.10 Council employees, members and volunteers who work with vulnerable adults or children must not use social media either to make social contact with such individuals or to accept invitations from such individuals through social media. This also applies to friends or family of those individuals.

4.Social media – personal use

4.1 It is wise to approach social networking with a degree of caution as you are joining a global community. Whilst it can have considerable benefits it can also provide access to individual's personal details from undesirable people/sources. Common sense should be applied - if you are concerned or uncertain about the appropriateness of any statement then you should not post or publish it. It is easy to publish something inadvertently that cannot be retrieved, and that can have far reaching consequences.

4.2 When you sign up for social networking websites, if identifying yourself as a council employee it is important you:

- are aware that the image portrayed could adversely affect the Council's image
- use a disclaimer
- know their obligations (policy, rules etc)
- are respectful.
- use privacy controls - take the time to set these appropriately to ensure the right level of privacy protection is applied for you (the default settings vary from network to network).

4.3 Employees, volunteers and members must make it clear when publishing content online that they are speaking on their own behalf by writing in the first person and by using a personal email address. Remember that what is published has the potential to be accessed for many years, even after the original content has been removed.

4.4 Information or remarks that will bring the council into disrepute are not to be discussed,

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referred to or stated on any internet website or online tool. The council recognises certain comments can amount to 'protected disclosures' under whistleblowing laws, which could give protective rights to employees – see **Whistleblowing policy**.

4.5 Publishing personal content should not be made using any Frampton Cotterell Parish Council email addresses or logos unless on a council authorised site.

4.6 When communicating with colleagues over social media sites, you are reminded to be respectful and to comply with 8.1.5 of the Code of Conduct to ensure you avoid the use of swearing or inappropriate language that has the potential to offend others.

4.7 The internet is merely a facility and the approach to dealing with unacceptable behaviour should not differ because it was carried out online. It is worth bearing in mind the following: 'Don't do anything online that you wouldn't do off line'.

4.8 Individuals (including service users, employees or their families) must not be named, described nor have their photos published on any website, without their express permission being given. However this does not apply where colleagues have an association through a social media site in their personal life.

4.9 Cyber-Bullying – means 'any use of information and communications technology to deliberately carry out hostile postings to distress another person.' As with any other form of bullying - this is not tolerated and will be dealt with under the **Grievance including Bullying and Harassment** or **Managing Employee Performance Policy**.

5. Other considerations

5.1 The Clerk and Staffing Working Group/Committee may need support and guidance in dealing with issues of non-compliance with this policy (HR advice can be sought following agreement from the Staffing Working Group/Committee as services are chargeable).

5.2 Regulations, protocols and procedures will need to be developed as necessary to protect the council's ICT systems.

All information on social media is subject to Freedom of Information requests so be aware of the council's liabilities when using social media at work or in your personal life.

6. Links to other policies & guides

- Grievance including Bullying and Harassment policy.
- Employee Code of Conduct.
- ICT Security policy including the Data Protection Act
- Managing Employee Performance policy.
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Member Code of Conduct

7. Useful Contacts

helpline@saferinternet.org.uk

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