Social Media & ICT

Social Media

At its November meeting, the parish council considered a proposal (report WPC.20.09.08) to set up, maintain and moderate Social media for the parish (e.g. Facebook and Twitter) in order to increase the reach that the parish has and engage with more residents. The meeting asked the clerk (**Min. 20.09.16 refers**) to contact other parishes to about how they use Social Media, and any issues that they have experienced, establish the likely time and resource implications for the clerk and report back to a future meeting.

A summary of responses to a survey through Suffolk Assn. Local Council's earlier this year is attached as Appendix A to this report. The key points were:
- Over 80% respondents used social media
- Of respondents, 44% spent 1 – 2 hours per week on it
- 60% found it an effective way to communicate with their community
- Don't forget to use other forms of communication too!
- Respond to comments whether positive or negative, to build engagement
- Have a policy in place for responding to comments

The parish council has recently held a community engagement day (3rd July, 2021), and with work developing on a range of projects:
- Neighbourhood Planning
- Housing Needs Survey
- Quiet Lanes;
- Road Safety Working Group; and
- Refurbishment of the Multi-Use Games Area and Skate Park

Additional channels of communication to reach residents of the parish, canvass their views and engage them in the work of the parish is more important than ever.

Cllr Turner recently attended the SALC organised session with Break Through Communications (BTC), on Building a conversation with your Community.

There was a balanced discussion on ways of engaging proactively with the community, and not to underestimate the power of Social Media, e-News Letters, quick opinion polls, Live streaming, or Video uploads and the printed letter. Remembering to break the conversations in to either Strategic or Tactical.

The experience gained by BTC with Councils has been very positive and has included live streaming of parish council meetings to Facebook, examples can be seen in Appendix C.

Hilary Workman
Clerk & RFO
July 2021

Making the message consistent with every message/medium is crucial. Communicate in volume, i.e. in many ways to gain maximum coverage. This helps breakdown the barriers with the community and builds trust in the Parish Council. Parishioner e-mails can be collected in several ways, e.g. links on website, on the bottom of the printed Meeting minutes, QR-codes.

Facebook is still the number one way to communicate with social media and has many 'tools' available for free, e.g. quick polls, video link, live feeds. The Facebook algorithm promotes in order of priority, live feeds, video, picture, then standard post.

Their further recommendation was to put in place an annual communication plan, to help the process. SALC are further supporting this process, and will be running further workshops and are looking into what funding could be available to help with equipment/costs etc.

It would be possible to set up a Facebook account for the parish where the majority of posts are published automatically to it whenever a new post is added to the website. This would enable the parish to reach a wider audience than is currently the case. With the accounts being administered by the clerk, there would be some moderation.

The parish council has existing policies for Media and Social Media Communications (attached as Appendices C & D respectively). In addition to this, the clerk has drawn up some guidelines to establish a consistent use of any social media (attached as Appendix E to this report).

In the medium to long term, there may be a small cost implication to maintaining and moderating social media in terms of the clerk's time, which could be estimated and built into the budget for the next financial year.

Mdsign, which provides the parish council's webpage and acts as its webmaster, has advised that it would need a one off access to them to set up the website to push content to social media accounts (that content then becomes stand alone content on the social media account) and that there would be no charge for this.

Additionally, Mdsign could set up the actual social media account at a one off cost of £35 plus VAT. This would have the advantage of the account being set up by a professional with experience, and ensure that no additional work is created for Mdsign when setting up the website to push content to the social media account.

One outcome of the Community Engagment day on 3rd July has been that some residents have now requested e-mail updates, and the clerk has now set up a mail chimp account to facilitate secure messaging.

Recommendation:
1.   The parish council set up and maintain a Facebook account for the parish to support engagement with on-going projects, emergency planning responses and develop two way conversations with residents of the parish. The clerk to record time spent on Social Media, to be reviewed in the next budget setting round.

2.   To authorise Mdsign to set up the social media accounts at a cost of £35 plus VAT.

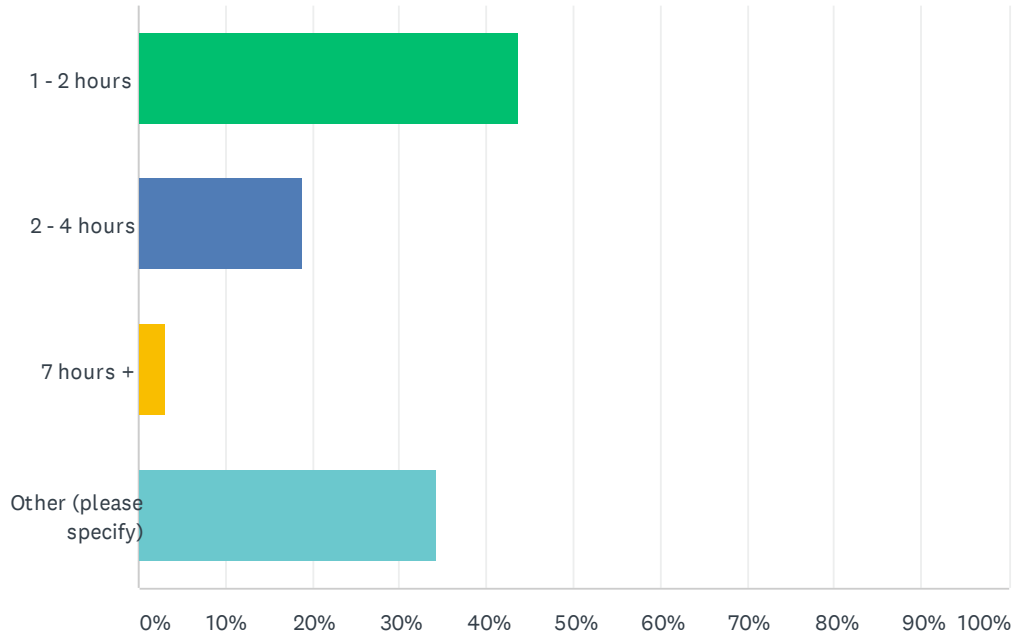# Q1 Do you use social media to promote the work of your town or parish council?

Answered: 34   Skipped: 0
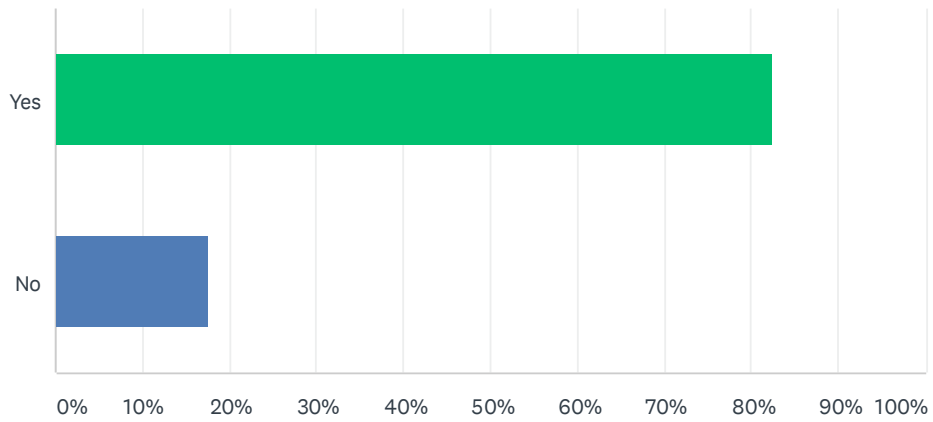
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	82.35%	28
No	17.65%	6
TOTAL		34

Q2 How much time a week do you use on social media for parish work

Answered: 32   Skipped: 2

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1 - 2 hours	43.75%	14
2 - 4 hours	18.75%	6
7 hours +	3.13%	1
Other (please specify)	34.38%	11
TOTAL		32

Q3 do you find this an effective way to communicate with your community

Answered: 30   Skipped: 4
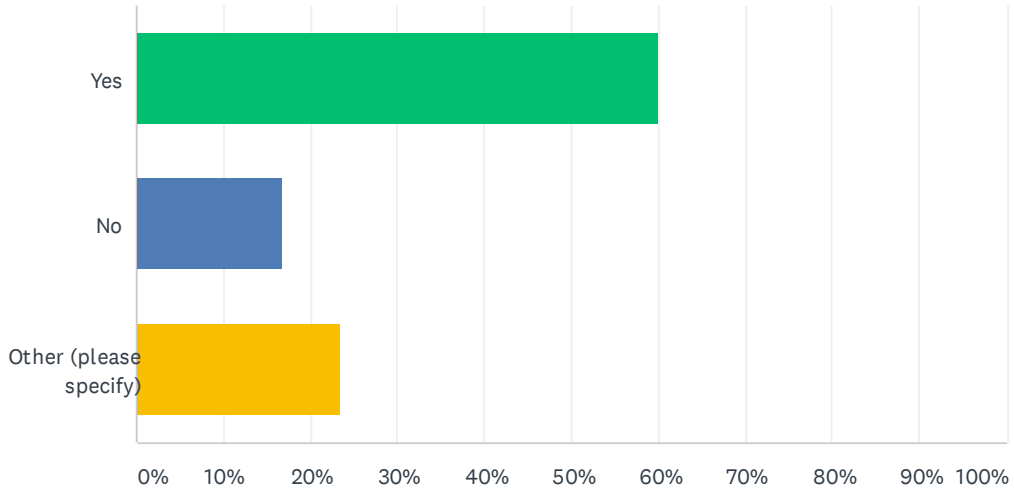
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	60.00%	18
No	16.67%	5
Other (please specify)	23.33%	7
TOTAL		30

Q4 Does public attendance to the meetings increase using social media

Answered: 32   Skipped: 2
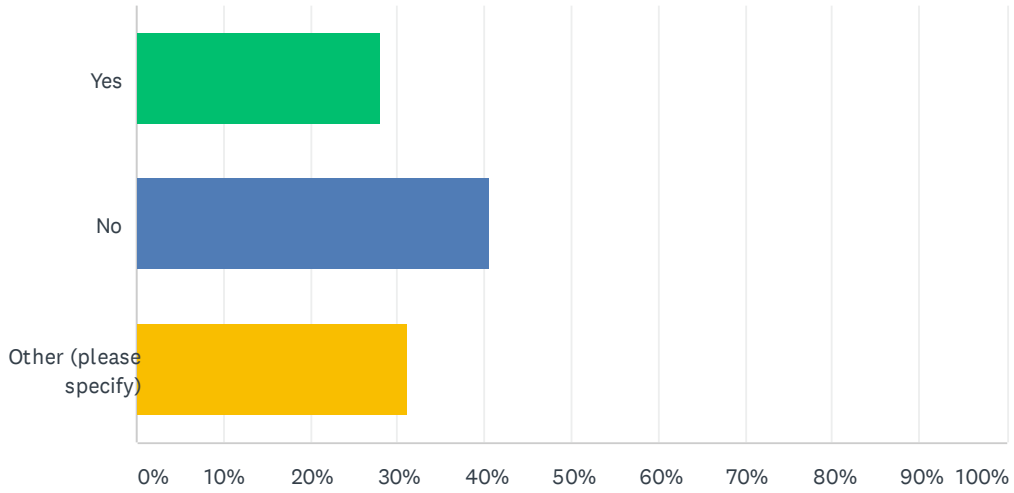
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	28.13%	9
No	40.63%	13
Other (please specify)	31.25%	10
TOTAL		32

Q5 Do you have any specific recommendations in communicating in this way

Answered: 29   Skipped: 5

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Aim to develop our own website for better communication (assume this survey is not about PC website - we use village website but slow process)	5/24/2021 2:29 PM
2	Allow time to look at your post before making it live. Look at it from every angle and how it can be misconstrued because it will be. Check, Check and Check! There's always someone to pick up your spelling or grammar and then the impact of the post is lost to those comments. Keep them short and factual and always include a photo to attract people's attention. We have had some very positive social media posts that have gone a long way to helping people understand what the Council is trying to acheive and some which have gone awry. Be mindful of individual Cllrs speaking on behalf of the whole Council on social media - this can lead to confusion and upset. Trust your Clerk - they're usually right!	5/21/2021 12:27 PM
3	we do not have our own social media account but post important information and meeting details / links on the village web page. We avoid entering into discussions on social media about issues but invite people to forward their views or attend a meeting	5/20/2021 11:45 PM
4	Keep your council social media as posting only rather than allowing chat or feedback unless you have people who can act as moderators	5/20/2021 5:55 PM
5	Don't recommend it . Social media tends to be the residents who moan but don't get involved and don't attend meetings. They tend not to understand how PCs work.	5/20/2021 5:11 PM
6	No, not especially.	5/20/2021 3:42 PM
7	1. Document and agree why you are doing it - what is the purpose? 2. Restrict access to staff only, not councillors, and agree a policy to cover what sort of content will be posted	5/20/2021 3:37 PM
8	We have a Facebook page.	5/20/2021 2:34 PM
9	Social media is effective in getting information of interest to the public but we still have several residents who do not use social media and do not want to so we still use various other methods e.g. noticeboards, via events, via our Saturday markets, via retail outlets.	5/20/2021 1:33 PM
10	The Council doesn't use social media officially. Where councillors use it unofficially, it can become a toxic nightmare with some comments bordering upon the actionable, and actual cases of the GDPR being breached. As Clerk, I have made it clear that I will have nothing to do with it if at all possible.	5/20/2021 1:33 PM
11	Share some fun items with the community as well as the serious stuff to get them engaged	5/20/2021 12:18 PM
12	You need to look at the ways that the various social media platforms treat content, and how they reward frequent posts with good engagement. Done well, social media can be a great tool; but if all you're thinking about doing is having a PC site with content once a month, you're wasting your time because it simply won't be seen.	5/20/2021 11:45 AM
13	We currently only use NextDoor. We do not use Twitter or Facebook.	5/20/2021 10:47 AM
14	That the clerk is given additional hours to assist with the new queries and resident contact you will get from using it.	5/20/2021 10:35 AM
15	Respond to comments whether they are positive or negative. Use social media for police/council/trading standards messages etc. Don't allow advertising of businesses or events that are not organised by the PC	5/20/2021 10:30 AM
16	We are not particularly active on social media - feel free to look up Claydon and Whitton Parish Council on Facebook and Twitter. We have a volunteer (ex-councillor) who updates twitter for us. I find it useful to make a post on our facebook page, then share it to the local noticeboard	5/20/2021 9:56 AM

group on facebook for maximum coverage. We started facebook just before the pandemic, so increased attendance at meetings may also be up because of Zoom - that has had a huge impact on increased attendance, so I cannot absolutely say that it was because of facebook. I also have a councillor who posts items on Nextdoor as well, particularly agendas, so we seem to hit most people in the village.

17	be honest	5/20/2021 8:55 AM
18	Use it as a notice board, try not to engage in a conversation as you then open yourself up to trolling/opinions/negativity etc	5/20/2021 8:43 AM
19	Share lots of pictures of local events, things rather than lots of words	5/20/2021 8:33 AM
20	We use Twitter & don't go near Facebook or any other social media platform	5/20/2021 8:31 AM
21	No	5/20/2021 7:47 AM
22	We have ours set up as a page rather than a group and organised the settings so that people cannot comment directly on the page. This is done to avoid having to devote many hours responding to inaccurate and misleading comments. We do share some posts to the local Facebook page which covers the village. If this results in a lot of comments we can then post a single clarification or explanation on our own page and share that. Nothing is ideal and how well it works depends on your community. Try not to mind too much about negative comments, they generally come from a very small number of people who have their own agenda.	5/20/2021 7:22 AM
23	Adapt tone of voice	5/20/2021 6:43 AM
24	Don't use it	5/20/2021 6:36 AM
25	.	5/19/2021 9:47 PM
26	Have 1 or 2 designated people to put posts on, it's important to retain control of content.	5/19/2021 9:22 PM
27	Have a policy in what you will do with regards to commmets - will you respond etc ?	5/19/2021 8:46 PM
28	Have a strong guideline for what content is approved by the council	5/19/2021 8:05 PM
29	No, we just use it when necessary remembering GDPR.	5/19/2021 7:31 PM

Advice from Breakthrough Communications

Social media and council communications generally are an essential part of any council's duty to keep residents informed about the uses for which public money is being used. There is a real appetite from residents to know about the activities of their council and councillors. Councils also have a duty to be as transparent as possible which social media makes much easier.

Some of the key benefits of effective communications and use of social media include:

- Promote the council's strategic objectives and give it a stronger digital voice in the community

- Give residents a clearer understanding of what it is the council does, who its people are and the role it plays in the community

- Develop a sustainable, two-way conversation with residents, organisations and local businesses

- Reach out and engage with residents across many different age groups, especially 'harder to reach' residents who may not otherwise engage with the council or councillor

- Report back to residents about issues, the work of the council and what you're doing as as councillor

- Opportunity to be a 'listening ear' to your community, listening to local concerns, issues and what's being talked about on social media

Those councils with the most positive reputations among their residents are those that communicate most effectively.

Hilary Workman
Clerk & RFO
July 2021

Appendix B

Different ways that local councils communicate

Print / hi-visibility communications:

- Printed newsletters
- Annual Reports
- Surveys
- Press releases and local media content
- Content in local publications
- Flyers / leaflet drops to houses
- Banners / lamp post banners
- Notice boards
- Events / in-person

Digital communications:

- Website
- Content on local websites
- Virtual events
- Surveys
- e-Newsletters
- Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Next Door, WhatsApp etc)
- Paid-for social media
- Digital notice boards

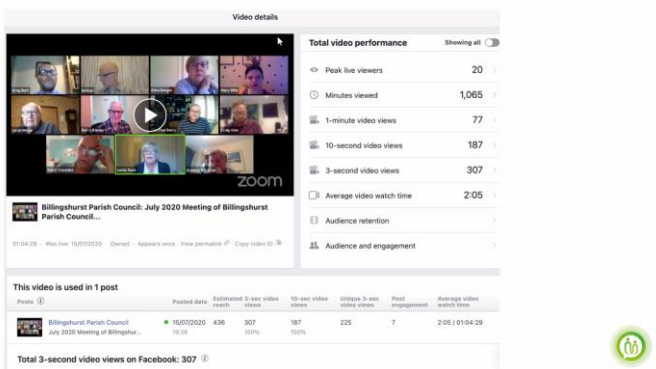## Design digital surveys in just a few clicks

Typeform (free version):

- GDPR compliant
- Up to 10 questions
- Up to 100 responses per month
- Up to 3 surveys
- *Paid-for access from £23 per month*

Survey Monkey (free version):

- GDPR compliant
- Up to 10 questions
- Up to 40 responses
- Unlimited surveys
- *Paid-for access from £32 per month*

Build 1-2-1 conversations on social media

Your yearly strategic conversation planner: Which of these could your council do?

- **Jan:** Quarterly newsletter and e-newsletter
- **Feb:** Live Q&A with the Mayor/Chairman
- **Mar:** Annual Parish / Town Meeting
- **Apr:** Quarterly newsletter and e-newsletter
- **May:** Live Q&A with the Mayor/Chairman
- **Jun:** Annual Report delivered

- **Jul:** Quarterly newsletter and e-newsletter
- **Aug:** Live Q&A with the Mayor/Chairman
- **Sep:** Drop-in consultation/exhibition
- **Oct:** Quarterly newsletter and e-newsletter
- **Nov:** Annual Residents Survey
- **Dec:** Live Q&A with the Mayor/Chairman

Media Policy

Introduction

1. Wickhambrook Parish Council ("the Council") is committed to the provision of accurate information about its governance, decisions and activities. Where this information is not available via the Council's publication scheme, please contact the Council's clerk.

2. The Council shall, where possible, co-operate with those whose work involves gathering material for publication in any form including use of the internet ("the media").

3. This policy explains how the Council may work with the media to meet the above objectives in accordance with the legal requirements and restrictions that apply.

Legal requirements and restrictions

4. This policy is subject to the Council's obligations which are set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1986, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998, other legislation which may apply and the Council's standing orders and financial regulations. The Council's financial regulations and relevant standing orders referenced in this policy are available via the Council's publication scheme.

5. The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information the disclosure of which is prohibited by law. The Council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation or its statutory instruments and regulations, the Council's standing orders, under contract or by common law. Councillors are subject to additional restrictions about the disclosure of confidential information which arise from the code of conduct adopted by the Council, a copy of which is available via the Council's publication scheme.

Meetings

6. A meeting of the Council and its committees is open to the public unless the meeting resolves to exclude them because their presence at the meeting is prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business or other special reason(s) stated in the resolution. In accordance with the Council's standing orders, persons may be required to leave a meeting of the Council and its committees, if their disorderly behaviour obstructs the business of the meeting.

7. Where a meeting of the Council and its committees include an opportunity for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the Council's standing orders.

8. The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a meeting of the Council and its committees (which includes e.g. using a mobile phone or tablet, recording for a TV/radio broadcast, providing commentary on blogs, web forums, or social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) which enable a person not at the meeting to see, hear or be given commentary about the meeting is permitted unless (i) the meeting has resolved to hold all or part of the meeting without the public present or (ii) such activities disrupt the proceedings or (iii) paragraphs 9 and 10 below apply.

This policy was reviewed at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council and passed by resolution of the Wickhambrook Parish Council on 6th May 2021 (Min. Ref 21.05.06). Next review by May 2022.

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9. The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a child or vulnerable adult at a Council or committee meeting is not permitted unless an adult responsible for them has given permission.

10. Oral reporting or commentary about a Council or committee meeting by a person who is present at the meeting is not permitted.

11. The Council shall, as far as it is practicable, provide reasonable facilities for anyone taking a report of a Council or committee meeting and for telephoning their report at their own expense.

12. The Council's standing orders will confirm if attendance by the public, their participation, photographing, recording, filming or other reporting is permitted at a meeting of a subcommittee.

Other communications with the media

13. This policy does not seek to regulate councillors in their private capacity.

14. The Council's communications with the media seek to represent the corporate position and views of the Council. If the views of councillors are different to the Council's corporate position and views, they will make this clear.

15. The Council's Clerk may contact the media if the Council wants to provide information, a statement or other material about the Council.

16. Subject to the obligations on councillors not to disclose information referred to in paragraph 5 above and not to misrepresent the Council's position, councillors are free to communicate their position and views.

17. Further advice on the Council's approach to the use of Social Media is set out in its Social Media policy.

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Wickhambrook Parish Council
Social Media Policy

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 social media such as blogs, social networking websites, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.

    1.2. This policy outlines the standards we require employees and volunteers to observe when using social media, 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 our Media Policy.

2. The scope of the policy

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

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

3. Responsibility for implementation of the policy

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

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

    3.3. All employees, volunteers and members should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any breach of this policy should be reported to The Clerk.

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

4. Using social media sites in our name

    4.1. Only the Clerk and Webmaster are permitted to post material on a social media website in the council's name and on our behalf.

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 the Council's Media Policy; and

        b) employees and volunteers must have sought and gained prior written approval to do so from The Clerk.

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Wickhambrook Parish 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.   Any employee, volunteer or member 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 Clerk in the first instance.

6.3.   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 Clerk.

6.4.   Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.

6.5.   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.

6.6.   When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.

6.7.   Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the council.

6.8.   You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools.

6.9.   Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.

6.10. Don't discuss employees without their prior approval.

6.11. Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion.

6.12. 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.

7. Monitoring use of social media websites

7.1. 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 against employees under our Disciplinary Procedure.

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

7.3. 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):

a) pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);

b) a false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;

c) material which is offensive, obscene

d) criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the council, members, or our employees;

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Wickhambrook Parish Council

    e) confidential information about the council or anyone else

    f) any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for you or the council); or

    g) material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

    Any such action will be addressed under Disciplinary Procedure and for employees may result in summary dismissal.

7.4. Where evidence of misuse is found we may undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure, involving 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.

7.5. If you notice any use of social media by other employees or volunteers in breach of this policy please report it to The Clerk in the first instance.

8. Monitoring and review of this policy

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

This policy was reviewed at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council and passed by resolution of the Wickhambrook Parish Council on 6th May 2021 (Min. Ref 21.05.06). Next review by May 2022.

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Guidelines for use of Social Media

1. Ensure that the account has at least two administrators to ensure continuity in the event of change of clerk/councillor(s)
2. Posts to be auto generated from Website posts (sizing of images etc to be checked regularly)
3. Set up the account as a page rather than a group, to ensure that it can be used for posting but not comments
4. Regular messaging with updates on projects and work to build an audience
5. Where possible, use images as part of each post
6. Where possible, use some video material to increase engagement

Hilary Workman
Clerk & RFO
July 2021