

# Social Media & ICT

## Social Media

At its July '21 meeting, the parish council approved a proposal (report WPC.21.07.04) to set up, maintain and moderate Social media for the parish (Facebook) in order to increase the reach that the parish has and engage with more residents.

Mdsign, which provides the parish council's webpage and acts as its webmaster, set up the actual social media accounts at a one-off cost of £35 plus VAT. The majority of posts are published automatically to Facebook whenever a new post is added to the website. This enables the parish to reach a wider audience and its audience is now growing, with 203 followers (up from 193 last year).

### Page overview

Last 28 days

Create post

Views	3,508
Reach	819
Content interactions	28
Follows	1


See more

### Top content

Last 28 days

See all

Boost this post to reach up to 2629 more people with every £35 that you spend.



I'm very pleased to tell you that we have now had confirmation from West Suffol...

Views

779

Reach

475

Interactions

2

Published by Blog2Social (API)

28 March at 10:26

The account is administered by the clerk and to date there has been minimal moderation required.

Generally, any discussion generated by posts from the parish council have taken place on the Wickhambrook Community pages. The clerk has posted to the Community pages asking contributors to contact the clerk direct if they have any queries with respect to parish council news.

Councillors are reminded of the media and social media policies (attached as Appendices A & B), particularly that only the Clerk and Webmaster are permitted to post material on a social media website in the council's name and on its behalf.

At the request of the parish council, the clerk recently set up a Whatsap group for Cllrs for reminders about meetings, etc and urgent contacts. Please note that META have now put AI onto its messaging (there is no way of removing this). This facility should not be used, and the clerks advice is to keep chat on the group to a minimum.

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, and this is being monitored in order that it is built into the budget for the next financial year.

On average, the clerk is spending about 3 hours a week on internet updates and social media (up from 90 minutes in 2024/25)

### **ICT & Communications**

As with previous financial years, the clerk is proposing that a small budget be set aside as an advance authorisation in the event of ICT issues where a call out is required. In the previous financial year, an expert was called out on one occasion at a cost of £55.00 against the authorised £150.00 (down from 3 occasions in 2023/24).

To ensure that print toner can be purchased in a timely fashion and take advantage of offers which arise from time to time, the clerk is also seeking an advance authorisation of expenditure on print toner for the current financial year.

The Local Government Act 1972 s.111 makes provision for the council to do anything that will facilitate, be conducive to or incidental to the discharge of its powers and functions.

The approved budget for 2025.26 makes provision for Office Supplies (£750.00) and Services and Supplies (£750.00).

### **Recommendation:**

- i) To authorise expenditure for print toner in the current financial year at a cost of not more than £600 plus VAT.**
- ii) To authorise the cost of call out charges when needed to resolve IT issues on the parish laptops, to a maximum of £150 plus VAT for the current financial year.**

## **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.
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.

## **Social Media Policy**

### **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 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.

## **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;

- 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.