

CONONLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Social Media Policy

Adopted February 2019

Introduction

The aim of this policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to Cononley Parish Councillors, the Clerk & RFO and others who engage with the Parish Council using online communications, collectively referred to as social media.

Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet. This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):

- Cononley Parish Council Website
- Facebook and other social networking sites
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites
- Youtube and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- Bloggs and discussion forums
- Email

The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication.

Application of this policy

The principles of this policy apply to Cononley Parish Councillors and the Clerk & RFO. It also applies to others communicating with the Parish Council. This policy sits alongside relevant existing Cononley Parish Council policies which need to be taken into consideration when considering this policy.

The current Code of Conduct for Cononley Parish Council, applies to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication.

Individual Cononley Parish Councillors and the Clerk & RFO, are responsible for what they post online, in both a council and a personal capacity.

Generally, Cononley Parish Councillors and the Clerk & RFO have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failure to comply with the law may have more serious consequences.

Parish Council Use of Social Media

Social media may be used to:

- Distribute agendas, post minutes and dates of meetings
- Advertise events and activities
- Good news stories linked website or press page
- Vacancies
- Re-tweet or share information from partner agencies such as Principal Authorities, Police, Library, Health etc.
- Announce new information to the community
- Post or share information from other parish related community groups such as schools, sports clubs, community groups and charities

- Refer resident queries to the Clerk and all other Parish Councillors

Code of Practice

When using social media (including email) Cononley Parish Councillors and the Clerk & RFO must be mindful of the information they post in both a personal and a parish council capacity and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative.

Online content should be accurate, objective, balanced and informative.

Restrictions on Use of Social Media

Parish councillors and the Clerk & RFO must not:

- hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms
- present personal opinions as that of the Parish Council
- present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to the Parish Council
- post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the Parish Council
- post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks
- engage in personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications
- use an individual's name unless given written permission to do so
- publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
- post any information that infringes copyright of others
- post any information that may be deemed libel
- post online activity that constitutes bullying or harassment
- bring the council into disrepute, including through content posted in a personal capacity
- post offensive language relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief
- conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence

In addition, the following actions are also prohibited

- **Publishing untrue statements** about a person which is damaging to their reputation is libel and can result in a court action and fine for damages.

This also applies if someone else publishes something libellous on Cononley Parish Council's social media site. A successful libel claim will result in an award of damages against the Parish Council.

- **Posting copyright images or text** on social media sites is an offence. Breach of copyright will result in an award of damages against the Parish Council.
- **Publishing personal data of individuals** without permission is a breach of Data Protection legislation and is an offence.
- **Publication of obscene material** is a criminal offence and is subject to a custodial sentence.

Parish Councillors' views posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the Parish Council at a council or committee meeting may constitute pre-disposition, predetermination or bias and may require the individual to declare an interest at council meetings

Parish Council to appoint a moderator

The Parish Council will appoint a nominated person as moderator of parish council social media output and be responsible for posting and monitoring content to ensure it complies with this Social Media Policy.

The moderator will have authority to remove any posts made by third parties from Parish Council social media pages which are deemed to be of a defamatory or libellous nature.

Anyone with concerns regarding content placed on social media sites that denigrate Cononley Parish Councillors, the Clerk & RFO, or residents should report them to the Clerk of the Council.

Misuse of social media content that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.

This policy will be reviewed annually.