

Social Media Policy

Wrockwardine Parish Council (the Council) recognises the need to enhance and improve its communication and engagement with the community, businesses and partner organisations through social media and networking websites. The aim of this policy is to provide staff, councillors, and the community with guidelines on the responsibilities of use and to provide reassurance on how the Council retains authority and control over such communication.

1. Definition of Social Media

Social media is a term for websites based on user participation and user generated content. It includes websites, social networking sites and other sites that are centred on user interaction. Social media has the following characteristics:

- It covers a wide variety of formats including text, video, photographs, and audio.
- It allows messages to flow between many different types of devices including PC's, phones, and tablets.
- It involves different levels of engagement by participants who can create, comment, or just view information.
- It speeds and broadens the flow of information.
- It provides one to one, one to many or many to many communications.
- It lets communication take place in real time or intermittently.

2. Why is the Council using social media?

Social media is an effective and measurable way to achieve community engagement through as many communication channels as possible, giving information about what is happening within the Parish and local area and to share important news and information.

The Council's social media channels supplement the information published on the website and any newsletters that are produced. The Council can:

- remind people of important events and alert followers instantly to breaking news.
- link to interesting and useful information about the Parish and local area published by other people.
- better communicate with those using mobile devices.

3. Use of Social Media Applications

The Council will use its website, Facebook page and e-mail to communicate with residents, businesses and partner organisations as follows:

3.1 Website

The website may be used for:

- Posting agendas, minutes, and dates of Parish Council meetings.
- Sharing Council policies and accounting information.
- Advertising Council events and activities.
- Providing general information on work the Council is doing.
- Sharing information from other tiers of local government and public authorities such as Telford & Wrekin Council and the Police.
- Announcing news and new information.
- Sharing information from other groups within the Parish e.g., community groups, clubs, associations, and bodies.
- Providing historical information about the Parish.
- Providing local information that may be of interest from other groups/organisations.
- Marketing campaigns.
- Consultation documents.
- A news feed & emergency information.
- Event listings.
- Key dates.
- Polls and information gathering.
- Tender invitations.
- Vacancies.
- Useful links.

3.2 Facebook

Facebook may be used to promote/share good news and information relevant to the residents of the Parish and supplement content already published on the Council's website as listed above at 3.1.

3.3 E-Mails

E-mails will be used to distribute information regarding Council business and to communicate on a one-to-one level with all Members of the Council, the community, business, and any other relevant body.

3.4 Limits of use

3.4.1 An official account on any social media may only be set-up with consent from the Council.

3.4.2 Once approved, each account will be set up by the Clerk.

3.4.3 The Council has designated the Clerk as 'owner' of all the Council's social media applications. All updates via social media will be the responsibility of the Clerk in the first instance.

3.4.4 An authorised Councillor, appointed by the Council, may assist the Clerk to disseminate information on the Council's website and Facebook page (the administrators).

3.4.5 No account details, including passwords, may be changed without the permission of the Clerk.

3.4.6 Only the administrators may use the accounts to post online.

3.4.7 The Council's social media accounts are managed and monitored regularly by the administrators and only they can post links to the corporate website, partner websites, useful links e.g., transport, road closures, links to other Facebook pages, local media etc.

3.4.8 All information published to the internet must comply with the Council's Confidentiality and data protection.

3.4.9 The social media accounts will primarily be used to promote 'good news' and information, supplementing content already published on the Council's website.

3.4.10 Any employee, Councillor or member of the public who becomes aware of social networking activity that would be deemed distasteful should make the Clerk aware as soon as possible.

3.4.11 Comments posted on and messages received on the Facebook page are views of individuals and do not represent the views of the Council.

3.4.12 Requests for something to be posted on the Facebook page should be directed to the Clerk in the first instance.

3.4.13 All interactions should be of a professional nature, considerate and respectful of others.

3.4.14 Postings should be informative, brief, and transparent.

3.4.15 Information posted on sites should not be personal opinions published as that of the Council nor should it bring the Council into disrepute or be contrary to the Council's Code of Conduct.

4. Moderation Policy

The Facebook page is reactively moderated. The Council cannot accept responsibility for the content of any comment.

The Council reserve the right to remove comments received on Facebook 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 site.
- Contain abusive language towards an individual involved in the thread, other organisations, or the page administrators.
- Constitute spam or promote or advertise products, except where it is for an event, publication or similar item that has direct relevance to the subject of discussion.
- Are designed to cause nuisance to the page administrators or other users.

For serious and/or persistent breaches of the moderation policy, the Council reserve the right to prevent users from posting further comments.

In addition, the administrators and followers of the Council's social media applications are requested to observe the following:

- All information published must comply with existing Council policies, the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and not disclose confidential matters or criticise Council policies, Councillors, volunteers, or paid employees.
- All imagery must be appropriate, and the necessary permission obtained prior to publishing.
- All comments, once posted, become the property of the Council who reserve the right to reproduce, distribute, publish, display, or edit. Derivative work can also be created from such postings or content and used for any purpose in any form on any other media.
- The Council are not responsible for, liable for nor do they endorse the privacy practices of Facebook or any linked websites. The use of Facebook and any linked websites is at the users own risk.
- The Council assumes no responsibility or liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred because of any use or reliance upon the information and material contained within or downloaded from these websites.

5. Personal Accounts on Social Media

Staff need to use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the terms of their contract of employment. 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, employees should use their professional judgement and take the most prudent action possible. If the Council is referred to in a way that is deemed defamatory or where confidential information is disclosed, it reserves the right to report the comment and request that it be removed.

Councillors are at liberty to set up 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 Council's view. Councillors should always present a professional image and not disclose anything of a confidential nature. Comments of a derogatory, proprietary, or libellous nature should not be made, and care should be taken to avoid guesswork, exaggeration, and colourful language.

6. Purdah

In the six-week run up to an election – local, general, or European – councils must be very careful not to do or say anything that could be viewed in any way to support any political party or candidate. The period is known as purdah. The Council will continue to publish important service announcements using social media but will monitor and potentially must remove responses if they are overtly party political during these times.

7. Will the Council respond to direct messages posted on social networking sites?

Where appropriate, the administrators will endeavour to respond as quickly as possible to questions received via social networking sites. However, all formal requests, comments, enquiries, or complaints should be emailed to the Council using the contact form on the website

WROCKWARDINE PARISH COUNCIL

or by writing to: Wrockwardine Parish Council, c/o Admaston House, Wellington Road, Admaston as these will not be answered via social media sites.

The Council may monitor forums and blogs to gain indirect feedback. The 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 Council reserves the right to take any necessary steps to protect members of the community and will delete any comments referencing the Council which are deemed abusive or offensive in anyway.

Social networking accounts are monitored daily Monday – Friday and not usually on a weekend. However, this could be subject to change dependant on the availability of the administrators.

Policy agreed at Wrockwardine Parish Council: 10th March 2021

Review Date: March 2022