

SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL**SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY****1 DOCUMENT HISTORY**

Date	Action
9 th June 2020	Document prepared by Cllr. Cornish and informed by NALC guidance. The document was approved in principle by Council subject to final proof reading by the Clerk.
12 th September 2020	Minor amendments made and document published.

2 INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms provide an effective communication channel to communicate with, and disseminate information to, residents of the **Parish**. Social media does not replace existing forms of communication but is complementary.

2.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this process is to provide the arrangements of how the Parish Council implements the use of social media.

2.2 SCOPE

This process applies to all forms of social media and social networking sites used by the Parish Council. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Facebook and other social networking sites;
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites;
- YouTube and other video clips, image sharing or podcast sites;
- LinkedIn or other professional networking sites;
- Blogs and discussion forums.

This process does not apply to the following:

- The Parish Council Website;
- Email communications by the Parish Council.

The process is applicable to **Parish Councillors** and anyone that may use or contribute to the Parish Council's social media platforms.

3 SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

The Parish Council uses the following social media platforms:

- Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/swindonparish/>
- Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/swindonparishcommunitygroup>

4 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

This process requires the following roles and responsibilities:

<p>Administrator(s)</p>	<p>The Administrator(s) are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to posts made by the public; • Summarising activity for the Parish Clerk ahead of meetings. <p>The Administrator(s) may be a Parish Councillors or a member of the Parish that has been approved by the Parish Council.</p>
<p>Parish Clerk:</p>	<p>The Parish Clerk is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling issues or topics raised on social media for discussion at Parish Council meetings on behalf of the Responsible Administrator. • Collating any formal complaints made by the public or Administer(s) for discussion at Parish Council meetings.

5 OPERATION

This section outlines how Social Media shall be implemented by the Parish Council.

5.1 SETUP & APPROVAL

A new Parish Council social media account requires the approval of the **Parish Council**. Any **Parish Councillor** may propose the use of a new platform and undertake the work to set-up the new account. The process for setting up a new social media account is:

1. Propose the use of a new platform at a Parish Council Meeting;
2. Parish Council votes on the use of a new Parish Council platform;
3. Set-up new social media platform as draft. The key elements should include:
 - a. Account name, hashtag etc;
 - b. Account description;
 - c. Account use of Parish Council Logo;
 - d. Confirm who the **Administrators** will be;
 - e. Any requirements specific to the platform (e.g. for YouTube a content style guide may be appropriate);
 - f. Any investment required (e.g. targeted advertising);
4. Present the draft social media account for approval at a **Parish Council** meeting;
5. **Parish Council** votes to go live on the new Parish Council social media account.

5.2 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The **Administrator(s)** should endeavour to reply to questions or comments by the public swiftly. Not all comments may require a response; this is at the discretion of the **Administrator(s)**.

The **Administrator(s)** should respond to comments or questions using the **Parish Council's** social media account, and not their personal account. The **Administrator(s)** should reply on behalf of the Parish councils; not themselves, avoiding using terms such as "I".

Posts that include comments or questions that can be answered by the **Administrator(s)** should be responded to as soon as possible.

These types of comments or questions include, but are not limited to:

- Dates and timings of Parish Council events;
- Responsibilities of the Parish Council;

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- Agreed policies of the Parish Council;
- Updates / news that has been shared at previous Parish Council meetings;
- Links to local authorities, health, library, and community organisations that can help;
- Factual information about the Parish.

Where posts include comments or questions that refer to new or ongoing matters of the Parish Council that have not been resolved, the **Administrator(s)** should respond stating that it will be raised at the next Parish Council meeting and should make the **Parish Clerk** aware.

These types of comments or questions include, but are not limited to:

- Draft Parish Council policies or positions;
- New issues or complaints that require the discussion at a Parish Council meeting.

Where posts include comments or questions that refer to matters of the Parish Council which are inappropriate for discussion on social media, the **Administrator(s)** should politely respond stating so, the reason why and any other channel on which the question or comments can be pursued.

These types of comments or questions include, but are not limited to:

- Question regarding planning applications currently under consultation;
- Complaints about Councillors or the Parish Council.

Where posts include comments that contravene behaviours set out in Section 6 and / or the social media platforms community standards the **Administrator(s)** should use the social media platform's procedures to report it. If the issue is consistently reoccurring or is of a serious nature (e.g. illegal activity / posts) the **Parish Clerk** and appropriate Authorities should be contacted.

5.3 REPOSTING CONTENT

The **Administrator(s)** may re-post / share content posted by other users in addition to that agreed by the Media Plan. The **Administrator(s)** should post content using **Parish Council's** social media account, and not their personal account. Content from the following organisation may be re-posted / shared:

- Cheltenham Brough Council
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Swindon Village Hall
- Swindon Village Society
- BBC News
- Other local community groups based within the Parish (as long as they are in accordance with the code of conduct outlined in Section 6).

Sharing content created by organisations not listed above requires approval by the **Parish Council**.

5.4 REVIEW

The **Administrator** should provide a summary of relevant social media activity and engagement as part of their Councillor Report at **Parish Council** meetings. The **Administrator** is responsible for liaising with the Parish Clerk to table items raised on social media for discussion at **Parish Council** meetings.

6 CODE OF CONDUCT

The obligations set out in this section are supplementary to those set-out in the Swindon Parish Council's Code of Member Conduct. The Code of Conduct applies to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication.

When using social media, **Parish Councillors** have a duty to use social media platforms to share accurate, objective, balanced, informative information that reflects the agreed standpoint of the **Parish Council**. All **Parish Councillors** have a duty to be respectful in their communication and not act in a manner that would bring the Parish Council into disrepute. This applies to information they post as the **Parish Council** or in a personal capacity on subjects related to parish council business.

Parish councillors **MUST NOT**:

- Hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms unless posting in an official capacity as **Swindon Parish Council** (i.e. using the Parish Council social media account);
- Present personal opinions as those 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;
- Post content for the purpose of personal gain;
- Engage in personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications;
- Publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission;
- Post online activity that constitutes bullying or harassment;
- Bring the **Parish 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 UK law, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence;
- Publish untrue statements about an individual or organisation which is damaging to their reputation is libel and can result in a court action and fine for damages;
- Publish copyright images or text on social media sites is an offence.
- Publish personal data of individuals without permission that has been obtained in line with the Parish Council's General Privacy Notice or Privacy Notice for staff*, councillors and role holders;
- Publish views in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the **Parish Council** at a council or committee meeting may constitute Pre-disposition, Pre-determination or Bias and may require the individual to declare an interest at council meetings;

Parish councillors **MUST**:

- Ensure all social media platforms are checked and updated regularly;
- Ensure that appropriate security settings are in place;
- Report any content that is contrary to the definitions established above and other policies to the **Parish Clerk** as soon as possible;
- Report any content that is contrary to the social media platform's community standards;
- Report **Anyone** with concerns regarding content placed on social media sites that denigrate **Parish Councillors**, or **residents** to the **Parish Clerk**.

Misuse of social media content that is contrary to this policy and other policies could result in action being taken by the **Parish Council**.

7 RELATED POLICIES AND PROCESS

- Code of Members' Conduct
- General Privacy Notice
- Privacy Notice for staff, councillors and role holders