

Social Media is a term for websites based on user participation and user-generated content. Many parish councils now use social media as a tool to communicate effectively with their parishioners, with their Account Managers acting as excellent ambassadors for their organisations.

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- 1.1. This policy covers the use of social media and networking sites established and managed by Corfe Castle Parish Council (“CCPC”).
- 1.2. This policy also covers the representations of any CCPC Councillor or employee within existing social channels who acts on behalf of CCPC or is using an official Corfe Castle Parish Council social media account.
- 1.3. This policy covers some aspects of personal use of social media.
- 1.4. CCPC retains the right to the “property” of information held in private accounts such as “Linked in” contacts when used professionally and on behalf of CCPC.
- 1.5. Social media includes social networking sites and other websites that are centred on user interaction but excludes email.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES

- 2.1. CCPC’s use of social media is intended to:-
 - 2.1.1. provide a valuable service to its parishioners
 - 2.1.2. share timely relevant information
 - 2.1.3. encourage open dialogue
 - 2.1.4. be honest and transparent
 - 2.1.5. take advantage of a low cost and powerful communication tool
 - 2.1.6. supplement other methods of access to services
 - 2.1.7. promote the work of CCPC.

3. OBLIGATIONS AND DUTIES OF CONTROLLERS OF CCPC SOCIAL MEDIA

- 3.1. Setting Up Accounts
 - 3.1.1. The following should be considered as part of the set-up process:-
 - 3.1.1.1. the objectives of the project/campaign
 - 3.1.1.2. the target audience
 - 3.1.1.3. why social media should be one of CCPC’s communications channels
 - 3.1.1.4. who will be responsible for managing and moderating that channel
 - 3.1.1.5. how the success of the account will be measured.
 - 3.1.1.6. that the setting up of any new social media account in the name of CCPC or on behalf of CCPC shall have previously been approved at a full Council meeting and minuted.
- 3.2. Running an Account or Using Social Media
 - 3.2.1. Social media accounts work best when updated regularly with credible content.
 - 3.2.2. Parishioners like queries to be answered promptly as this is the expectation of users of these sites.
 - 3.2.3. The best social media channels:-
 - 3.2.3.1. are transparent and honest
 - 3.2.3.2. use a suitable tone of voice which is friendly and accessible
 - 3.2.3.3. have an Account Manager and a stand-in with the skills and knowledge to manage the account when the Account Manager is absent or sick
 - 3.2.3.4. are empowering by giving the users useful timely information

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- 3.3. Role of the Account Manager
- 3.3.1. The Account Manager will need to:-
 - 3.3.1.1. aim to update and monitor CCPC social media at least once a week where reasonably practicable (on Council working days only) and respond to questions and queries in a timely fashion (this should be within hours, or if this is not possible, post a response to say why this is not possible)
 - 3.3.1.2. make it clear that the account is run or supported by CCPC
 - 3.3.1.3. provide clear branding
 - 3.3.1.4. cross promote all other CCPC channels (like, follow, retweet, share etc)
 - 3.3.1.5. deal promptly with any offensive or defamatory material posted on the page / account (using the tools provided by the particular site)
 - 3.3.1.6. make sure log in details are kept secure
 - 3.3.1.7. the Clerk is administrator of the CCPC social media accounts
 - 3.3.1.8. pass on any queries that they cannot answer to the relevant person within CCPC
 - 3.3.1.9. ensure their responsibilities are fully handed over to a new Account Manager if they leave their role
 - 3.3.1.10. close the account and delete all the associated information and offering an alternative if appropriate, if it becomes out of date or irrelevant (i.e, if it is set up for a specific campaign which has ended)
 - 3.3.1.11. watch out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on any blog or page and remove them (together with any they are notified of by others) as soon as possible to avoid any perception that such views are condoned
 - 3.3.1.12. report any information they find on any social networking site that falls under the mandatory reporting guidelines.
 - 3.3.1.13. Close down any accounts that are not updated, as the nature of social media means if there is no new content the account will lose credibility. In addition, followers of the account will expect that comments and queries are dealt with in a timely fashion.
 - 3.3.2. Account Managers should understand that moderating does not mean deleting content that they do not agree with or is critical of CCPC. Calm and reasonable dialogue should be entered into. Only truly offensive or defamatory material should be deleted.
 - 3.3.3. Account Managers should note that in many cases issues are user moderated in that another user will present a different point of view as part of the debate.

4. GUIDANCE FOR USERS OF CCPC SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA GENERALLY

- 4.1. CCPC Councillors and employees should be familiar with the terms of use on third party websites which are being used and adhere to these at all times.
- 4.2. No information should be published on social media that is not already known to be in the public domain without the written prior approval of the Clerk or Chairman / Vice Chairman of CCPC.
- 4.3. Information that is published should be factual, fair, thorough and transparent.
- 4.4. CCPC Councillors and employees should be mindful that information published in this way may stay in the public domain indefinitely without the opportunity for retrieval and/or deletion.
- 4.5. Copyright laws must be complied with.

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- 4.6. Conversations or reports that are meant to be private or internal must not be published without permission of the Clerk or Chairman / Vice Chairman of CCPC.
- 4.7. CCPC Councillors and employees shall not publish any information which is the subject of an exempt item at any CCPC meeting without written authorisation from the Clerk or the Chairman / Vice Chairman of CCPC.
- 4.8. CCPC Councillors and employees must not publish anything that would be regarded in the workplace as unacceptable under other CCPC policies.
- 4.9. CCPC Councillors and employees must remember that they will be seen as ambassadors for CCPC and should always act in a responsible and socially aware manner.
- 4.10. CCPC Councillors and employees should:-
 - 4.10.1. set appropriate privacy settings for any blog or networking site
 - 4.10.2. watch out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on any blog or page and inform the Account Manager as soon as possible
 - 4.10.3. be aware that the higher their profile, the more likely it is that they may be seen as acting in an official capacity when they blog or network
 - 4.10.4. avoid publishing any information that they could only have accessed in their position as CCPC Councillor or employee
 - 4.10.5. be careful if making 'political' points and avoid being specific or personal about individuals
 - 4.10.6. comply with CCPC's General Data Protection Regulation Policy
 - 4.10.7. use a disclaimer. When using social media for personal purposes, councillors and employees must not imply they are speaking for CCPC. Avoid using their CCPC email, CCPC logos or other CCPC identification when using social media for personal purposes. Where possible a standard disclaimer should be used such as: "Statements and opinions here are my own and do not necessarily represent the policies or opinions of Corfe Castle Parish Council."
 - 4.10.8. report any information they find on any social networking site that falls under the mandatory reporting guidelines.
- 4.11. CCPC Councillors and employees should not:-
 - 4.11.1. blog in haste
 - 4.11.2. post comments that they would not be prepared to make in writing or face-to-face contact
 - 4.11.3. use CCPC facilities for personal or political purposes
 - 4.11.4. present personal opinions as those of CCPC
 - 4.11.5. present themselves in a way which might cause embarrassment to CCPC
 - 4.11.6. publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
 - 4.11.7. bring CCPC into disrepute

5. PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA AND CCPC

- 5.1. Although CCPC does not want to interfere in CCPC Councillors' and employees' personal lives, the lines between private and public can become blurred particularly on online social networks.
- 5.2. Any actions that affect an employee's work performance, the work of others, or CCPC's interests are a suitable focus for CCPC policy.
- 5.3. CCPC Councillors and employees should clearly identify that they are not speaking on behalf of CCPC when using social media for personal purposes, or to give a personal rather than a

professional opinion. CCPC Councillors and employees should also be aware that confidential matters must not be discussed.

- 5.4. When using social media for work purposes, CCPC Councillors and employees should be guided by CCPC's Code of Conduct.
- 5.5. CCPC employees could face disciplinary action if they fail to have proper conduct on social media sites. This applies at work and at home when CCPC matters or staff members are the subject matter.
- 5.6. Allegations that CCPC Councillors have breached this policy may result in referral to the Standards Process as a contravention of the Members Code of Conduct.
- 5.7. In the event of misuse of an CCPC social media account, it will be shut down and/or the Councillor's or employee's access will be blocked.
- 5.8. Appropriate action under other CCPC policies could be taken as a result of misuse of social media by a member of staff.
- 5.9. For the purposes of this policy, misuse might be considered as, but is not limited to, one or more of the following:-
 - 5.9.1. using a site/tool for personal gain or to solicit business for personal gain
 - 5.9.2. publishing materials that might be considered inappropriate or offensive
 - 5.9.3. behaving in manner which is considered to be inappropriate or offensive
 - 5.9.4. publishing materials considered to be defamatory or to the detriment of CCPC and/or the public perception of CCPC.

6. PURDAH

- 6.1. In the six-week run up to an election, local or parliamentary, councils have to be very careful not to do or say anything that could be seen in any way to support any political party or candidate. This period is known as "purdah".
- 6.2. CCPC will continue to publish important service announcements using social media during purdah but may have to remove responses if they are overtly party political.
- 6.3. Elected members and members up for election are asked not to post on CCPC social media accounts during purdah.