



St Stephen in Brannel Parish Council

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Social Media Policy¹

Policy statement

This policy is intended to help employees 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.

This policy outlines the standards St Stephen in Brannel Parish Council require employees and members to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which your use of social media may be monitored and the action that may be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.

The scope of the policy

All employees and members are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the Council.

Breach of this policy by employees may be dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to dismissal.

Breach of this policy by members may lead to a report being made to the Monitoring Officer for failure to adhere to the adopted Code of Conduct.

In some events, for example harassment or discrimination, a breach may be referred to the police.

Responsibility for implementation of the policy

The Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.

The Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to work.

All employees, 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 in the first instance. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Clerk.

Using social media sites in the name of St Stephen in Brannel Parish Council.

Only the Clerk and Administrator are permitted to post material on social media sites in the Council's name and on behalf of the Council.

Using social media

St Stephen in Brannel Parish Council recognise the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about the Council and community. It also recognises the

¹ Adopted by Full Council at the meeting held on Wednesday 15th July 2020 under minute number FPC168/20. Due for review in 2023.

importance of employees and members joining in and helping shape local government conversation and direction through interaction in social media. Before using social media on any matter which might affect the interests of the Council you must have read and understood this policy.

It is recommended that in the case of Facebook and similar sites, members wishing to keep their personal life and official capacities separate should create separate accounts.

In any biography where the member is identified as a Councillor, or a staff member identified as an employee, the account should state that the views are those of the Councillor/Employee in question and may not represent the views of the Council. Use of the Council's crest on a personal account or website should only occur with the written permission of the Clerk.

Employees and members are personally responsible for the content that they publish on any form of social media. Publishing or allowing to be published (in the form of a comment) an untrue statement about a person which is damaging to their reputation may amount to libel.

Rules for use of social media

To prevent a breach of policy, employees and members should adhere to the following general rules:

- Do not upload, post or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.
- Any employee or member who feels that they have been harassed or bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a staff member or Councillor onto a social media website should inform the Clerk or Chairman of the Staffing Committee..
- 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
- Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.
- 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.
- When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.
- Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the Council.
- Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.
- Don't discuss employees or Councillors without their prior approval.
- Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion.
- 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.

- Member should be aware that the Electoral Commission requires that candidates provide a return of expenditure on any form of advertising or campaign literature – and this includes web advertising. Full guidance for candidates can be found at www.electoralcommission.org.uk. I
- Councillor social media accounts may need to be closed down for a defined period before local council elections in order to comply with legislation (Purdah).

Monitoring use of social media websites

Employees and members 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.

Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability.

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 investigation (this list is not exhaustive):

- pornographic material (that is writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);
- a false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;
- material which is offensive, obscene, criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the Council, members, or employees;
- confidential information about the Council or anyone else;
- any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil); or
- material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

If you notice any use of social media by employees, volunteers or Members in breach of this policy please report it to the Clerk or Chairman.