Barford & Wramplingham Parish Council

Social Media Policy

The aim of this Policy is to set out a Code of Practice and provide guidance to Barford and Wramplingham Parish Councillors and employees in the use of online communications, collectively referred to as social media. It is not a policy for media relations which is covered in a separate policy. Currently Barford & Wramplingham Parish Council host a website with no facility for public to add comments. There is a community facebook Group and community website, neither of these are under the control of the Parish Council.

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

- Parish Council Website
- Parish Council e-mails
- Facebook, Myspace and other social networking sites
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites
- Youtube and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- Bloggs and discussion forums

Aspects of the Members' Code of Conduct apply to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. Online content should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate. What you write on the web is permanent.

The Council will appoint a nominated person to update and maintain the Parish Council website.

Social Media may be used for:

- Post minutes and dates of meetings
- Advertise events and activities
- Good news stories linked website or press page
- Vacancies
- Retweeting or 'share' information from partners e.g. Police, Library, Health etc.
- Announcing new information.
- Post or Share information from other Parish related community groups/clubs/associations/bodies e.g. School, community groups
- Refer resident queries to the clerk and all other councillors

Individual Parish Councillors are responsible for what they post. Councillors are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published e-mail address which is used for council business. Councillors are strongly advised to have separate council and personal email addresses.

Code of Practice

Guidance when using social media (including email).

1. All social media sites in use should be checked and updated on a regular basis and ensure that the security settings are in place
2. When participating in any online communication;
    a. Always disclose your identity and affiliation to the Parish Council
    b. Be responsible and respectful; direct and informative; brief and transparent.
    c. Never make false or misleading statements.
    d. Parish Councillors should not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment. All Parish Councillors need to be mindful of the information they post on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council or bring the Council into disrepute or is contrary to the Council's Code of Conduct or any other Policies.
    e. Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks. Language that maybe deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age or religion or belief should not be published on any social media site.
    f. Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications.
    g. Never use an individual's name unless you have written permission to do so.
    h. Permission to publish photographs or videos on social media sites should be sought from the persons or organisations in the video or photograph before being uploaded.
3. Respect the privacy of other councillors and residents.
4. Do not post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations, e.g. libel, copyright.
5. Councillors should note that not all communication requires a response.
    a. There will not be immediate responses to communications to be discussed by the Parish Council and all responses will be agreed by the Parish Council.
    b. If a matter needs further consideration it may be raised at either the open forum or as a full agenda item for consideration by a quorum of Councillors. The poster shall be informed via the page or direct message that this is the case.
    c. If a Councillor feels unable to answer a post for example of a contentious nature this shall be referred to the Parish clerk. The poster will be informed by way of response to this fact and also be invited to correspond with the Parish Clerk directly.
    d. Some communication from residents and other third parties may be required to be discussed at a Parish Council meeting. When this is necessary the item will be placed on the next available agenda. Any response will then be included in the minutes of the meeting.
6. Councillors or parishioners who have any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should report them to the Clerk of the Council. Misuse of such sites in a manner that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.
7. The Policy will be reviewed in line with the review schedule.