



## **PRESS and SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

### **Introduction**

1. Highley Parish Council ("the Council") is committed to the provision of accurate information about its governance, decisions and activities.

2. The Council shall, where possible, co-operate with those whose work involves gathering material for publication in any form including use of the internet ("the media").

### **Legal requirements and restrictions**

3. This policy is subject to the Council's obligations which are set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1986, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998, other legislation which may apply and the Council's standing orders and financial regulations. The Council's financial regulations and relevant standing orders referenced in this policy are available via the Council's publication scheme.

4. The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information the disclosure of which is prohibited by law. The Council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the Council's standing orders, under contract or by common law. Councillors are subject to additional restrictions about the disclosure of confidential information which arise from the code of conduct adopted by the Council, a copy of which is available via the Council's publication scheme.

### **Meetings**

5. A meeting of the Council and its committees is open to the public unless the meeting resolves to exclude them because their presence at the meeting is prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business or other special reason(s) stated in the resolution. In accordance with the Council's standing orders, persons may be required to leave a meeting of the Council and its committees, if their disorderly behaviour obstructs the business of the meeting.

6. Where a meeting of the Council and its committees include an opportunity for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the Council's standing orders.

7. The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a meeting of the Council and its committees (which includes e.g. using a mobile phone or tablet, recording for a TV/radio broadcast, providing commentary on blogs, web forums, or social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) which enable a person not at the meeting to see, hear or be given commentary about the meeting is permitted unless (i) the meeting has resolved to hold all or part of the meeting without the public present or (ii) such activities disrupt the proceedings or (iii) paragraphs 8 and 9 below apply.

8. The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a child or vulnerable adult at a Council or committee meeting is not permitted unless an adult responsible for them has given permission.

9. Oral reporting or commentary about a Council or committee meeting by a person who is present at the meeting is not permitted.

10. The Council shall, as far as it is practicable, provide reasonable facilities for anyone taking a report of a Council or committee meeting.

11. The Council's standing orders will confirm if attendance by the public, their participation, photographing, recording, filming or other reporting is permitted at a meeting of a sub-committee.

#### **Other communications with the media**

13. The Council's communications with the media seek to represent the corporate position and views of the Council. If the views of councillors are different to the Council's corporate position and views, they will make this clear.

14. The Clerk may contact the media if the Council wants to provide information, a statement or other material about the Council.

15. Subject to the obligations on councillors not to disclose information referred to in paragraph 5 above and not to misrepresent the Council's position, councillors are free to communicate their position and views.

**Social Media Policy** the Parish Council realise that social media and networking websites have become a regular part of everyday life and that many people enjoy membership to sites such as Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) This policy is to provide councillors and staff with guidelines on responsibilities of use.

**Why are the Parish Council using social media?** The Parish Council's aim is to inform members of the community and the wider local area, through as many communication channels as possible, about what is happening within the Parish and local area and share important news and information.

The Parish Council's social media channels supplement the information published on their website.

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

### **3. Use of Official Accounts**

Highley Parish Council operate a Facebook account for the promotion of activities and events and as a communication and broadcast tool.

#### **Examples of acceptable corporate content are:**

- Marketing campaigns
- Consultation documents
- News feed & emergency information
- Event listings

- Key dates
- Short debates & quick comments on hot topics and relevant news (discussion board)
- Polls and information gathering
- Useful links and local information

**The following outlines the limits of their use:**

- An official account on any social media website may only be set-up with consent from the Parish Council.
- Once approved, each account will be set up by the Parish Clerk or Chair.
- Only authorised staff may use these accounts to post online and access to the account is strictly limited. The Parish Council's social media accounts are managed and monitored daily by the Parish Clerk/RFO. Only the Clerk/RFO is allowed to post links to the corporate website, partner websites, 'Useful' links for example local transport sites etc, links to other Facebook pages, local media e.g. Shropshire Star, National organisations
- All information published on the internet must comply with the Parish Council's confidentiality policy and data protection.
- Social media accounts will primarily be used to promote the 'good news' and information, supplementing content already published on the Parish Council's website.
- Any employee, Councillor or member of the public who becomes aware of social networking activity that would be deemed distasteful should make the Parish Clerk/RFO aware as soon as possible.

**Facebook** The Parish Clerk/RFO manages the Council's Facebook page. Facebook pages are used to highlight news, make announcements, engage with the community, and share information.

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

Request for something to be posted on the Parish Council's Facebook page, should be directed to the Parish Clerk.

**Social media moderation policy** The Parish Council 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 wall
- Contain abusive language towards an individual involved in the thread, other organisations or the page administrator
- 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. Information about locating and sharing knowledge and expertise is welcomed, but within the specific discussion

- Are designed to cause nuisance to the page administrator or other users

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

### **Use of Photos and Video**

Only The Parish Clerk has permission to upload photos and videos. The appropriate permissions must be obtained for all imagery

### **Personal Accounts on Social Media**

Councillors and staff need to use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the terms of their contract of employment or code of conduct. Councillors and employees should use their professional judgment and take the most prudent action possible. If the Parish Council is referred to in a way that is deemed defamatory or 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.

### **Purdah**

In the six-week run up to an election – local, general or European – councils must not to do or say anything that could viewed in any way to support any political party or candidate. The period is known as Pre-election Sensitive Period (formerly 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.

### **Will the Parish Council respond to direct messages posted on social networking sites?**

If appropriate, the Clerk/RFO will endeavour to respond as quickly as possible to all questions received via social networking sites. All formal requests, comments, enquiries, or complaints should be emailed to the Parish Council using the contact form on the website.

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