



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

A guide for council members and employees on using social media to promote the work of Tollerton Parish Council and in a personal capacity (*also applicable to Parish Council website content*).

This policy will be reviewed (and amended where appropriate) on an annual basis by full council. Date of last review: 9th June 2021.

Introduction

What is social media?

Social media is the term given to web-based tools and applications which enable users to create and share content (words, images and video content), and network with each other through the sharing of information, opinions, knowledge and common interests. Examples of social media include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

Why do we use social media?

Social media is essential to the success of communicating Tollerton Parish Council's work. It is important for some council members and employees to participate in social media to engage with our audience, participate in relevant conversations and raise the profile of Tollerton Parish Council's work.

Why do we need a social media policy?

The difference between a personal and professional opinion can be blurred on social media, particularly if you're discussing issues relating to Tollerton Parish Council's work. While we encourage the use of social media, we have certain standards, outlined in this policy, which we require everyone to observe. Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary in the public domain.

This policy is intended for all council members and employees of all levels and applies to content posted on both a parish council device and a personal device. Before engaging in work-related social media activity, Councillors and employees must read this policy.

Setting out the social media policy

This policy sets out guidelines on how social media should be used to support the delivery and promotion of Tollerton Parish Council, and the use of social media by council members in both a professional and personal capacity. It sets out what you need to be aware of when interacting in these spaces and is designed to help support and expand our official social media channels, while protecting the council and its reputation and preventing any legal issues.

Point of contact for social media

Our Council Chairman and Executive Officer are responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of our social media channels. If you have specific questions about any aspect of these channels, speak to the Executive Officer.

Which social media channels do we use?

Tollerton Parish Council uses the following social media channels: Facebook and Twitter.

Guidelines

Using Tollerton Parish Council's social media channels — appropriate conduct...

1. Tollerton Parish Council Chairman and Executive Officer are responsible for setting up and managing the social media channels. Only those authorised to do so will have access to these accounts.
2. Be an ambassador for our brand. Council members should ensure they reflect the Parish Council's values in what they post and use our tone of voice.
3. Make sure that all social media content has a purpose and a benefit for Tollerton residents and the Parish Council, and accurately reflects the Parish Council's agreed position.
4. Bring value to our audience(s). Answer their questions, help and engage with them
5. Take care with the presentation of content. Make sure that there are no typos, misspellings or grammatical errors. Also check the quality of images.
6. Always pause and think before posting. That said, reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
7. If Council is sharing information about supporters, service users or third party organisations, this content should be clearly labelled so our audiences know it has not come directly from Council. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, Council must ensure they have the consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.
8. Always check facts. Council should not automatically assume that material is accurate and should take reasonable steps where necessary to seek verification, for example, by checking data/statistics and being wary of photo manipulation.
9. Be honest. Say what you know to be true or have a good source for. If you've made a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it.
10. Council should refrain from offering personal opinions via the Parish Council's social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'retweeting'. Controversial content should be agreed by full council.
11. Councillors and employees should not set up other Facebook groups or pages, Twitter accounts or any other social media channels on behalf of Tollerton Parish Council unless agreed by full council. This could confuse messaging and brand awareness.
12. Tollerton Parish Council as a whole is not a political organisation and should not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties.
13. If a complaint is made on the Council's social media channels, members should seek advice from the Executive Officer before responding.
14. Sometimes issues can arise on social media which can escalate into a crisis situation because they are sensitive or risk serious damage to the Council's reputation. The nature of social media means that complaints are visible and can escalate quickly. Not acting can be detrimental to the Parish Council.

Use of personal social media accounts — appropriate conduct...

This policy does not intend to inhibit personal use of social media but instead flags up those areas in which conflicts might arise. Councillors have a code of conduct duty to behave appropriately, and in ways that are consistent with Tollerton Parish Council's values and standing orders, both online and in real life.

1. Be aware that any information you make public could affect how people perceive Council. You must make it clear when you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of Council. If you are using your personal social media accounts to promote and talk about Tollerton Parish Council's work, you must use a disclaimer such as: *"The views expressed on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent the Parish Council's positions, policies or opinions."*
2. Councillors who have a personal/business blog or website which indicates in any way that they are members of Tollerton Parish Council should discuss any potential conflicts of interest with Council.
3. Councillors with specialist fields of expertise must take particular care as personal views published may be misunderstood as expressing Council's view.
4. If a Council member is contacted by the press about any social media posts that relate to Council, they should talk to the Council Chairman or Executive Officer immediately and under no circumstances respond directly.
5. As a whole the Parish Council is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. When representing the Parish Council, you are expected to hold this position of neutrality. Councillors who are politically active in their spare time need to be clear in separating their personal political identity from the Parish Council and understand and avoid potential conflicts of interest.
6. Always protect yourself and the Council. Be careful with your privacy online and be cautious when sharing personal information. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so do consider the content carefully. When you are using social media sites it is important that you do so safely.
7. Think about your reputation as well as the Council's. Express your opinions and deal with differences of opinion respectfully. Don't insult people or treat them badly.

Further guidelines

Libel

Libel is when a false written statement that is damaging to a person's reputation is published online or in print. Whether members are posting content on social media as part of Council or in a personal capacity, they should not bring the Parish Council into disrepute by making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups.

Copyright law

It is critical that all Council abide by the laws governing copyright, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. Never use or adapt someone else's images or written content without permission. Failing to acknowledge the source/author/resource citation, where permission has been given to reproduce content, is also considered a breach of copyright.

Confidentiality

Any communications that Councillors or employees make in a personal capacity must not breach confidentiality. For example, information meant for internal use only or information that Tollerton Parish Council is not ready to disclose yet. For example, a news story that is embargoed for a particular date.

Discrimination and harassment

Council should not post content that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, on either an official Council social media channel or a personal account. For example:

- making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief,
- using social media to bully another individual or posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content.

Responsibilities and breach of policy

Everyone is responsible for their own compliance with this policy and any breach of policy will be reviewed by full council.