

# *Bredon, Bredon's Norton and Westmancote Parish Council*

## **Social Media Policy**

Agreed on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2014

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **A. Use of social media**

- (i) This policy has been prepared with reference to The Code of Recommended on Local Authority Publicity (Communities and Local Government Circular 01/2011)
- (ii) Social networking sites are one way of engaging with the local community. The Council will use social media to inform people about what it is doing and to discuss local issues.
- (iii) The Council should think about what it says and how it says it, in just the same way as it must when making statements in person or in writing.
- (iv) Councillors must bear in mind that if they have a private blog, website, or social media pages and refer to Council business on them, they will be viewed as acting in their official capacity.
- (v) The Council will appoint a nominated Councillor or Councillors as moderator(s). They will be responsible for posting and monitoring of the content and ensuring it complies with the Social Media Policy. The moderator will have authority to remove any posts made by third parties from the Council's social media pages which are deemed to be of a defamatory or libellous nature. Such posts will also be reported to the hosts (i.e. Facebook) and also to the Clerk.
- (vi) The social media may be used to:
  - post minutes and dates of meetings;
  - advertise events and activities, good news stories linked to a website or press page, vacancies;
  - retweet or 'share' information from partners i.e. Police, library and health services etc.;
  - announce new information;
  - post or share information from other parish related community groups/clubs/associations/bodies, e.g. schools and sports clubs;
  - refer residents' queries to the clerk and all other councillors.

(vii) This Policy will be reviewed annually.

## **B. Facebook**

(i) Facebook is a free social networking website to connect and interact with other people. The Council will use Facebook to raise awareness of what is happening in the Parish, encourage participation in consultations, promote local events and discuss issues.

## **C. Twitter**

(i) Twitter is a free micro-blogging site that allows users to send and read other users' text-based posts (up to 140 characters). The Council will post updates about what is going on in the district, the work it does and local events.

(ii) The Council will agree which other accounts it should follow and retweet in order to provide benefit to its followers.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA RULES AND GUIDELINES**

### **D. Monitoring, responding and replying**

(i) The Council will try to respond to as many comments as possible, but this won't always be possible. The Council's social media profiles are not monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and it is easy to miss posts during busy social media traffic.

(ii) If members of the public would like an individual response or if they have a serious or urgent enquiry, they should contact the Clerk.

(iii) Where significantly inaccurate comments are made about the Council, a correction will be published so that others are not misled. The Council also reserves the right to remove such comments.

(iv) In part, the Council will rely on the measures of protection and intervention which the social networking site already has in place (e.g. against illegal, harmful or offensive content), for example by flagging comments or alerting them to any breaches of the site's terms and conditions.

### **E. Council rules relating to social media.**

(i) Any communication from the Council must meet the following criteria:

- it should be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- it should not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually-oriented or racially offensive;
- it should not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere without the permission of the author or copyright holder;

- it should not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;
  - official Council business should be moderated by either the Chair of the Council or the Clerk;
  - social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.
- (ii) Equally, any communication to the Council is expected to meet the following criteria:
- it should be civil, tasteful and relevant;
  - it should not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
  - it should not contain content copied from elsewhere without the permission of the author or copyright holder;
  - it should not consist of large volumes of the same message (also called "spamming");
  - it should not contain anyone's personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;
  - it should not advertise products or services;
  - it should not seek to impersonate someone else.
- (iii) The Council reserves the right to remove any contributions that break the aforementioned rules or criteria.
- (iv) The Council's response to any communication received not meeting the above criteria will be to either ignore it, or to inform the sender of its policy, or to send a brief response as appropriate. This will be at the Council's discretion based on the message received, given the limited resources available. Any information posted on the Facebook page not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. Repeat offenders will be blocked from the Facebook page.

## **F. Libel**

- (i) The Council must take care not to make any libellous statement. In law this means a statement that lowers the reputation of a person or organisation in the eyes of a reasonable person. By publishing such a statement both the Council and the originator of the libel can get into serious trouble. The Council will endeavour to take down any statement that could be deemed to be libellous at the earliest opportunity.

## **G. Pre-election period**

- (ii) In the six week run up to an election - local, general or European - councils must not do or say anything that could be seen in any way to support any political party or candidate. The Council will continue to publish important service announcements using social media but may have to remove any response deemed to be overtly party political or seeking to influence people to vote for a particular candidate.