



## Social Media Policy

<b>Twyford Parish Council Policies and Procedures</b>	
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## Social Media Policy

### What is Social Media?

'Social media' is the term commonly given to websites and online tools allowing users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. This interaction can be through computers, mobile phones and new generation technology such as i-pads.

### Council Use of Social Media

Use of digital and social media will form an integral part of how Twyford Parish Council delivers its services in a way that improves the communications both within the Parish Council and between the Parish Council and the people businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

The Parish Council has a corporate presence on the web and an e-Mail channel which it uses to communicate with people who live in, work in and visit Twyford parish.

The Parish Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. We may ask those who contact us for their preferred channel of communication when we deal with them.

Over time the Parish Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur this Social Media Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

### Principles

- a) To publish information about the work of the Parish Council to a wider audience.
- b) Not to enter into online debates on the work of the Council.

### **Guidelines on the use of Social Media**

Standards of behaviour expected as a representative of Twyford Parish Council (Official and personal accounts)

1. Be aware of and recognise your responsibilities identified in the Social Media policy.
2. Remember you are responsible for the content you post on Social Media.
3. Never give out personal details of other councillors such as home addresses and telephone numbers which are not readily available in the public domain. Contact details should only be given out when they are in the public domain and even then it is best practice to exchange such contact details outside of

public social media channels. Ensure that you handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the Data Protection Act.

4. Know your obligations: you must comply with other council policies when using social media.
5. Most online communities have their own rules and guidelines, which we will always abide by.
6. Be aware that social media networks are rapidly growing in popularity and are used by all ages in society.
7. Always remain aware of web security and ensure you use a secure password and keep you PC secure from viruses. You do not want your social media accounts hacked.
8. Ensure that any mobile device you use to access social media is also secure to avoid others from using your device to post under your own name.
9. Do not get pulled into an argument online, neither party tend to come off well. Additionally limited space and a short time frame in which to phrase a response can inflame a situation. Try to introduce a constructive discourse by asking for useful feedback or assistance to change, or acknowledge the complaint and try to take the discussion offline.
  - a. Dealing with "Trolls": Online there are individuals who purposefully start and perpetuate an argument. If someone is refusing to act rationally or unwilling to discuss offline they may be a troll. The colloquialism being "don't feed the trolls". If you encounter and identify a troll the best response once giving them an opportunity to discuss rationally is to stop interacting with them.
10. We promise that any communications (this includes all content on the Parish Council's web site) from the Parish Council will meet the following criteria:
  - a. be civil, tasteful and relevant;
  - b. not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
  - c. not contain content copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright;
  - d. not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;
  - e. will be moderated by either the Chair / Vice Chair of the Parish Council or the Clerk / Assistant Clerk to the Parish Council.
  - f. social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising
11. Equally, we expect any communications to the Parish Council to meet the following criteria:
  - a. be civil, tasteful and relevant;
  - b. not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;

- c. not contain content copied from elsewhere, for which the enquirer does not own the copyright;
- d. not sending large volumes of the same message (also called "spamming");
- e. not to contain anyone's personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;

12. Councillors and Staff are at liberty to have their own social media accounts on any platform they choose. However these should be identified as personal and do not reflect the Council's view.

13. Any personal social media account is the responsibility of the account holder and must comply with the social media policy.

#### Council Website

Our web site is hosted by Fasthosts and is normally continuously available.

The Parish Council will maintain one web site

[www.twyfordparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.twyfordparishcouncil.gov.uk)

The approved content manager is responsible for publishing content to the web site.

The Finance committee are responsible for approving content types on the web site prior to its publication.

Where necessary, we may direct those contacting us to our website to see the required information, or we may forward their question to the appropriate committee for consideration and response.

We may not respond to every comment we receive particularly if we are experiencing a heavy workload.

#### Other Social Media

#### **Electronic mail policy is dealt with under Policy 8.0**

#### **Parish Council Twitter channel**

Twitter is a micro blogging platform where users can post short messages of up to 140 characters and converse with other users.

Twitter additionally has an in built picture manager for uploading photographs.

Twitter is completely public with non-users able to view data and details about the user.

Users have an account that includes a "news feed", profile and other tabs that are used to navigate content.

#### **Parish Council Facebook channel**

Facebook is a social network where users create a personal profile and connect with friends also on Facebook. Profiles tend to have a level of privacy depending on what

settings have been enabled however it is wiser to assume that all information is public as what you post can be shared by your friends and then by their friends ad infinitum.

Unlike Twitter, Facebook offers the opportunity to get more in depth with your content and is particularly powerful at engaging with your audience. The system of creating a post and inviting people to comment on it, share it and like it give the audience many ways of interacting depending on their own preference, and many ways for it to spread further.

Facebook is a complex tool for the user with many diverse ways to collect and create content.

### **Parish Council LinkedIn**

LinkedIn is a social network specifically designed for career and business professionals to connect.

### **Parish Council YouTube/Flickr channel**

YouTube is a video sharing service that enables users to post, comment on and view videos posted by themselves and other users.

Flickr is a similar service but primarily focused on photography.

**Currently the Parish Council does not operate a YouTube/Flickr channel.**

### **Parish Council Google +**

Google + is a social media platform like Facebook that in particular organises people into circles that echo real life work, personal and other relationships they have.

**Currently the Parish Council does not operate a Google + account.**

### **Parish Council Blogging**

Blogging is the term for posting news/newsletter type formats online like an online journal or newspaper.

**Currently the Parish Council does not operate a Blogging account.**

### **Do**

1. Set appropriate privacy settings for your blog or networking site – especially if you have a private, non-political blog
2. Keep an eye out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on your blog or page and remove them as soon as possible to avoid the perception that you condone such views
3. Be aware that the higher your profile as a Councillor, the more likely it is you will be seen as acting in your official capacity when you blog or network
4. Ensure you use Council facilities appropriately; if you use a Council provided blog site or social networking area, any posts you make are likely to be viewed as made in your official capacity
5. Be aware that by publishing information that you could not have accessed without your position as a Councillor you are likely to be seen as acting in your official capacity

6. Make political points if you wish, but be careful about being too specific or personal if referring to individuals. An attack on individuals may be seen as disrespectful, whereas general comments about another party or genuine political expression is less likely to be viewed as disrespect.

#### **Don't**

1. Blog in haste.
2. Post comments that you would not be prepared to make in writing or face to face
3. Use Council facilities for personal or political blogs

#### **Parish Council What's App**

Membership is restricted to the Councillors, Clerk & Deputy Clerk.

The What's App Group was set up primarily to convey information on social activities. In addition, it's been used to pass on urgent information and for the Officers to issue reminders to councillors.

#### **Principles**

- a) To share information relating to the work of the Parish Council to Councillors.
- b) To gauge opinions or support for an idea.
- c) Not to enter into long debates.
- d) Not to discuss decisions made, or about to be made by the Council.
- e) Not to be used for personal discussions or non-Council related business.
- f) Councillors are responsible for adhering to data protection and privacy regulations when using WhatsApp for Council related communication.