

### **1. Social Media Policy**

The Parish Council realize 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 Twitter. This policy is to provide councillors and staff with guidelines on responsibilities of use.

### **2. 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, noticeboards and other means.

- 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**

Hopton Wafers Parish Council operate a Facebook account primarily for sharing information ie for the promotion of activities and events and as a communication and broadcast tool ie to provide useful links to consultation documents.

It is not proposed to be a portal for the expression of opinions, debates, marketing campaigns and information gathering. Other community Facebook pages may be more suitable mediums for views and opinions. The Parish Council encourages representations from the community via verbal or written (email/letter) avenues.

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

- An official account on any social media site may only be set up with consent from the Parish Council.
- Once approved, each account will be set up by the Parish Clerk or other nominated Councillor.
- Only authorized 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 or other nominated Councillor. Only the Clerk or other nominated Councillor 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 organizations.
- 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 aware as soon as possible.

### **Facebook**

The Parish Clerk or other nominated Councillor 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 factual knowledge is welcomed, but not to promote discussions or debates.
- 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.

**Twitter**

For the moment Hopton Wafers Parish Council does not have a Twitter account and so the following is for future reference should a Hopton Wafers Parish Council Twitter account be created.

The Parish Council Twitter account is managed by the Parish Clerk or nominated Councillor.

If you follow the Parish Council on Twitter you can expect regular tweets covering:

- News and press releases
- Statements
- Photos
- Retweets of notable announcements
- Information forwarded on from Shropshire Council

If the Parish Council follows a Twitter account it does not imply any kind of endorsement.

The Parish Clerk/nominated Councillor will review all @ messages daily and re-tweet where we feel applicable. The Parish Council also will not normally reply to direct messages. The limitations of Twitter's format means that we would not be able to give a full and useful reply. The Council, therefore, ask that in these instances contact is made with the Parish Council using the contact form on the website.

All tweets must be:

- Timely and appropriate
- Mindful of the audience
- Accurate without any spelling mistakes or typos
- Factually correct and without personal opinion
- Concise and not designed to promote a discussion
- In line with data protection

Any complaints/issued raised on Twitter should be reported to the Parish Clerk.

**Use of Photos and Video**

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

**Personal Accounts on Social Media**

Staff need to use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the terms of their contract of employment. The absence of, or lack of, explicit reference to a specific website or service does not limit the extent of the application of this policy. Where no policy or guidelines exist, employees should use their professional judgement 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 at all times 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.

**4. Purdah**

In the six-week run up to an election – local or general – councils have to very careful not to do or say anything that could be viewed in any way to support any political party or candidate. The period is known as purdah. The Council will continue to publish important service announcements using social media but will monitor and potentially have to remove responses if they are overtly party political.

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

If appropriate, the Clerk/nominated Councillor 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 Clerk – see details below.

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 any way.

**Contact details for the Parish Clerk:**

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Hopton Wafers Parish Council  
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