

# **Aubourn and Haddington Parish Council Social Media Policy**

## **Introduction**

The objective of this policy is to provide councillors and staff an overview of social media and outline the council's position on various aspects of their use. In addition, it includes guidelines on parish council responsibilities when using such channels of communication.

## **What is Social Media?**

Social media is the term commonly given to websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. This is done via electronic devices such as mobile phones, laptops and tablets etc.

Examples of social media websites include:

Social Networking – Facebook  
Video sharing – YouTube/TikTok  
Micro blogging - Twitter  
Message boards – Reddit  
Social bookmarking - Pinterest

## **Council Use of Social Media**

### **Principles**

- To publish information about the work of the parish council to a wider audience.
- To avoid entering into an online debate of the council's work. Social media must NOT be used in the recruitment process for employees or new councillors, other than the sole purpose of placing vacancy advertisements, as this could lead to potential discrimination and privacy actions, as well as a breach of data protection issues.

### **Approved Council Social Media**

- Parish Council website.
- Parish Council Facebook page.

### **Users of Council Social Media**

- The clerk and all councillors have the authority to issue official press releases. No other member of staff has the authority to issue public statements on behalf of the council.

### **1. Guidance for Council Officers on the Use of Council Social Media**

- Officers should be familiar with the terms of use on third party websites – eg: Facebook, and adhere to these at all times.
- No information should be published that is not already known to be in the public domain (eg: available on the council's or other local authority or government websites, contained within the minutes of the parish council or other local

authority or government meetings, or as stated in the aforementioned publicised policies and procedures).

- Information that is published should be factual, fair, thorough and transparent.
- Everyone must be mindful that information published in this way may stay in the public domain indefinitely, without the opportunity for retrieval or deletion.
- Copyright laws must be respected.
- Conversations or reports that are meant to be kept private or internal must not be published without permission.
- Do not publish anything that is unacceptable in the workplace.
- Users must remember that they will be seen as an ambassador for the council, and should always act in a responsible and socially aware manner.

## **2. Third Party Social Media and Individual Councillor Usage**

Councillors must be aware that whether they are acting in a private capacity or not, an impression may be conveyed that they are posting for and on behalf of the parish council. The parish council has adopted a code of conduct that is binding for all members. If you use social media in your official capacity as a councillor, you should always be mindful of the code and of the 7 Nolan Principles applicable to holding public office (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership).

### **Do:**

- Set appropriate privacy settings for any blog or network site.
- Watch out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on any blog or page and remove them as soon as possible to avoid any perception that you condone such views.
- Be aware that the higher your online profile as a councillor is, the more likely it is that you may be seen as acting in your official capacity when you blog or network.
- Ensure that any council facilities are used appropriately. If using a council provided blogsite or social network area any posts that you make are extremely likely to be viewed as being made in your official capacity.
- Avoid publishing any information that you could only have accessed in your position as a councillor.
- Be careful of making 'political' points and avoid being specific or personal about individuals.

### **Don't:**

- Blog in haste.
- Post comments that you would not be prepared to make in writing or in face-to-face contact.
- Use council facilities for personal or political purposes.

**Signed** ..... **Chair**

**Dated:** XXXXXX

Signed .....Member of the Council

Dated: \*\*\*\*\*