

# FIVEHEAD Parish Council

## Social Media Policy

Adopted on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2015 min

**At the present time Council does not wish to have or maintain a social media presence such as Twitter or Facebook.**

**This policy is therefore about Fivehead Village Website and use of emails.**

### **1. Policy statement**

1.1. This policy is intended to help councillors and council staff make appropriate decisions about the use of social media communication such as emails.

The council will encourage the use of social media for the purposes of:

- providing and exchanging information about services;
- supporting local democracy;
- gathering citizen insights and managing citizen relationships;
- promoting village events or tourism for the area;
- supporting community cohesion, neighbourliness and resilience; and
- creating internal communications and learning and development.

1.2. This policy outlines the standards the council requires councillors and staff to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which the council will monitor the use of social media and the action to be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.

1.3. This policy supplements, and should be read in conjunction with all other policies and procedures adopted by the council, such as the Equal Opportunities Policy, Anti-Harassment Policy, Data Protection Policy, Disciplinary Procedure, Members Code of Conduct and such like.

1.4. This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

### **2. Who is covered by this policy**

2.1. This policy covers all individuals working at all levels with the council, including all elected and co-opted councillors, the clerk to the council.

### **3. The scope of this policy**

3.1. The council has a village website and maintains a village email list, which it uses to communicate with people who live in and visit the parish. The council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Council seeks at all times to ensure we have parishioners permission for use of their e mail address.

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.

3.2. All members and staff are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the reputation, privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the council, its services, employees, partners and community.

3.3. Serious breaches of this policy by employees may be dealt with under the Employee Disciplinary Procedure. The council may take disciplinary action in respect of unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive comments by an employee.

Breach of the policy by volunteers will result in the council no longer using their services and, if necessary, appropriate action will be taken.

The following policy should be amended to suit the council and will need to be re-visited annually to reflect changes in the council's use of social media.

Behaviour required by the Members' Code of Conduct shall apply to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. Members will bear in mind that inappropriate conduct can still attract adverse publicity, even where the code does not apply. Online content should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate. Members must be aware that their profile as a councillor means the more likely it is they will be seen as acting in an official capacity when using the internet to communicate.

It must be remembered that communications on the internet are permanent and public.

#### **4. Rules for using internet use/social media.**

4.1 The Council will appoint a nominated "Webmaster" to maintain and update the Parish Council Website. The website may be used to:

- Post notices and minutes of meetings
- Advertise events and activities
- Post good news stories
- Link to appropriate websites or press page if those sites meet the council's expectations of conduct
- Advertise vacancies
- Announce new information appropriate to the council.
- Post or Share information promoting bodies for community benefit such as schools, Scouts, sports clubs and community groups
- Post other items as the council see fit.

4.2 Staff and individual parish councillors are responsible for what they post. They are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published e-mail address, which is used for council business. Both staff and councillors are strongly advised to have separate council and personal email addresses.

4.3 When participating in online communication staff and councillors must be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent.

4.4 Residents and councillors should be aware that not all communication through social media requires a response, although an acknowledgement should be made if appropriate.

4.5 If a matter raised in any form of social media needs further consideration by the council it may be raised at either the open forum or as a full agenda item for consideration by a council. Any response agreed by the council will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

4.6 Reports of any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should be reported to the Clerk for referral to the council as required.

4.7 The Policy will be reviewed annually.