

Bacton Parish Council

Social Media

Adopted: 14 April 2025

Minute reference: 140425/83

The aim of this Policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to Bacton Parish Council staff and Councillors in the use of online communications, collectively referred to as social media.

Social media is a term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet. The policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):

- Facebook
- Messenger
- Discussion forums
- Parish Council emails
- Parish Council websites and any other websites used by the Parish Council for communication.

Facebook and Messenger will be used as a means of communicating with the general public and to support any website information.

Emails will be used to distribute information of Parish Council business.

Bacton Parish Council has its own website which will be included in this policy.

The Social Media Policy will be reviewed annually.

Who does it apply to?

The principles of the Policy apply to all Parish Councillors and Council Staff. It is also intended as guidance for others communicating with the Parish Council.

The Policy does not seek to regulate Parish Councillors and staff in their private capacity.

Existing forms of communication and policies

The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication. The website and other forms of social media are used to enhance communication therefore, existing means of communication should continue with social media supporting those other methods.

Management of Social Media

The Clerk will be the moderator and will be responsible for posting and monitoring of all content on Bacton Parish Council Social Media sites ensuring it complies with the Social Media Policy. The moderator has authority to remove any posts made by third parties from our social media pages which are deemed to be defamatory, libellous in nature or are otherwise deemed to be inappropriate. Such posts will be reported to all members and may also be reported to the Hosts (i.e. Facebook) and Police.

The Clerk will be appointed the “Webmaster” to maintain and update any Parish Council Website and to liaise with hosts of other websites which the Parish Council uses for communication.

The Parish Council’s use of Social Media may include;

Post agendas and dates of meetings

- Advertise events and activities
- Announce new information
- Share/post good news stories
- Provide links to other websites (including those of the District and County Councils)
- Advertise staff vacancies and vacancies on the Parish Council
- ‘Share’ information from partners i.e. police, health etc.
- Post or share information from other Parish related community groups/clubs/associations/bodies e.g. community groups
- Refer resident queries to the clerk and all other Parish Councillors
- Collate and respond to issues raised on social media by residents

All social media sites in use should be checked and updated on a regular basis and the Bacton Parish Council must ensure that security settings are in place

Participating in Social Media

When participating in any form of Social Media whether using your personal account, your published Parish Council account, as a moderator or in a private or an official capacity; the following standards should be adhered to:

- Be responsible and respectful
- Be direct, informative, brief and transparent
- When posting from a personal account always disclose your identity and affiliation to the Parish Council.
- Never make false or misleading statements.
- Parish Councillors should not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment.
- All Parish Councillors need to be mindful of the information they post on sites
- Make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Parish Council or bring the Parish Council into disrepute or are contrary to the Parish Council's Code of Conduct or any other policies.
- Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks.
- Language that may be deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age or religion or belief should not be published on any social media site.
- Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications
- Never use an individual's name unless you have written permission to do so.
- Permission to publish photographs or videos on social media sites should be sought from the persons or organisations in the video or photograph before being uploaded.
- Respect the privacy of other Parish Councillors and residents.
- Do not post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations, see below libel and copyright.
- At no time should information discussed in confidence be used or discussed on social media.
- Bacton Parish Council Social Media will not be used for the dissemination of political advertising.
- Refrain from using the Parish Council's Social Media for commercial purposes, advertising or selling products and/or services.

Guidance for Parish Councillors using the Parish Council's Social Media Presence

Whether posting on the Parish Council's behalf or posting their own personal views on an issue, Parish Councillors must accept the following responsibilities:

- Individual Parish Councillors may post their own personal views but, must be aware that they are responsible for what they post from their own accounts and/or email addresses.

- Parish Councillors are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published email address which is used for Parish Council business.
- Councillors are strongly advised to have separate Parish Council and personal email addresses and adhere to The Members' Code of Conduct.
- When posting from a personal account always disclose your identity and affiliation to the Parish Council.
- Make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Parish Council or bring the Parish Council into disrepute or is contrary to the Parish Council's Code of Conduct or any other Policies.
- Where moderators are posting words provided by other Parish Councillors, the responsibility for the content lies with the creator not the moderator.

Authorisation for new posts

Before a new post from Bacton Parish Council can be made public it needs to go through the proper channels. This section states what level of involvement from the whole or part of the Parish Council is required for various categories of post:

- General announcements will be made following previous discussion at full Council meetings.
- Meetings and events – moderators will post, no approval needed as dates already approved
- Vacancies – wording approved by Chair or Clerk to be posted by moderators/admins
- Other community groups – sharing information from other community groups moderators will post, no approval needed as dates already approved
- Resident queries/concerns – moderators/admins will post standard response to say query/concern has been forwarded to Parish Clerk, immediate response may not be possible if discussion at next meeting is required. Parish Clerk will get back to them as soon as possible.
- Factual responses where information can be provided e.g. questions with dates of meetings, venues and so on – no approval needed – wording by moderators/admins.
- Standard holding response where suggestions or concerns need to be discussed at the next full Council meeting. 'Thank you for contacting us; this subject will need to be discussed this at the next full Council meeting. We will get back to you on this but please be aware it will not be until after (date of next meeting). In the meantime please feel free to contact the Clerk with any concerns or questions to parishclerk@bacton-pc.gov.uk or by calling 07767 163706.
- Standard response where Bacton Parish Council is aware of the issue or is awaiting responses from others 'Thank you for contacting us. We are aware of (issue) and we are currently awaiting a response from (who). Once we have received this response we will be able to share this with you. In the meantime please feel free to contact us with any concerns or questions in the future or email the Parish Clerk on (email address).'

Responding to posts from the general public

Residents and Parish Councillors should note that not all communication requires a response. There may not be immediate responses to communications as they may need to be discussed by the Parish Clerk and all responses except those requiring factual responses, like dates and venues of meetings will be agreed by the Parish Council.

The Parish Clerk and the moderators will be responsible for all final published responses.

If a matter needs further consideration it may be raised at either the open forum or as a full agenda item for consideration by a quorum of Parish Councillors.

If the moderator feels unable to answer a post for example, of a contentious nature, this will be referred to the Parish Clerk. The poster will be informed by way of response to this fact and also be invited to correspond with the Parish Clerk directly.

Some communication from residents and other third parties may be required to be discussed at a Parish Council meeting. When this is necessary the item will be placed on the next agenda. Any response will then be included in the minutes of the meeting.

The nominated moderator shall remove any negative posts which may contain personal and inflammatory remarks, libellous or defamatory information, without further comment or notification.

Parish Councillors or parishioners who have any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should report them to the Parish Clerk. Misuse of such sites in a manner that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.