

**UGTHORPE & HUTTON MULGRAVE PARISH COUNCIL**  
**SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

This policy outlines the standards required of councillors, volunteers and employees when using all social media, the circumstances around monitoring social media and action taken in respect of breaches of the policy.

### **Scope**

All employees, volunteers and councillors are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality and interests of the council. Breach of this policy may be dealt with under either the council's staff disciplinary procedure or the councillors' Code of Conduct.

### **Responsibility**

The parish council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. The Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks. Any recommendations for change will be taken to a parish council meeting for discussion and decision. The policy will be kept under review by the parish council.

### **Management**

In addition to online social media rules and regulations, which must be abided by, the parish council has the following additional criteria:

#### Ugthorpe & Hutton Mulgrave Parish Council Social Media Sites

- a) The parish council social media presence will be created and managed solely by the Clerk. No council member will have access to the administration of the social media accounts. For business continuing purposes, passwords will be kept on file in a secure cabinet.
- b) The accounts will be sent up using the generic parish council email address.
- c) Only information regarding the parish council will be entered, including events organised by the parish council.
- d) The account may create links to pages of local government organisations or organisations/causes/events relating to and for the benefit of the parish.
- e) Posts created by the parish council will meet the following criteria:
  - Civil and relevant
  - No extreme religious or political views will be expressed, and will not be used for dissemination of any political advertising
  - Not contain unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive content
  - Not contain any personal information
  - Will not post content belonging to a third party unless have consent to publicise
  - Posts and photo albums created on Facebook will be available for all users of Facebook
  - Photographs uploaded will not have direct view of any child's face without prior consent of their guardian
- f) Residents will be encouraged to be "Friends" and/or "Follow" the parish council. However, "Friends" will not be allowed to post new topics to the Facebook page, although Friends will be able to comment on topics created by the parish council. Note the following:
  - The parish council is not responsible for the accuracy of content posted by any third party and opinions expressed do not represent those of the parish council
  - Use of social media and any linked websites are at the users own risk
  - The parish council assumes no responsibility or liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred as a result of any use or reliance upon the information and material contained within social media accounts
  - The parish council accepts no responsibility for lack of any service from temporarily unavailable social media websites

- By choosing to comment and/or use the parish council's social media accounts users are deemed to agree to this policy
- g) The parish council asks "Friends/Followers" to adhere to the following:
- Be considerate of others
  - Personal attacks on anyone including councillors and staff of the parish council will not be tolerated
  - Stay on topic
  - Refrain from using for commercial purposes or to market products
- h) Messages will be removed that have:
- abusive language content
  - content that may cause offence to a specific group of people eg comments on a person's sexuality, race and so on
  - libellous content
  - any comment that may cause offence in any way
- i) If "Friends"/"Followers" are repeatedly abusing the parish council's accounts then they will be removed and be unable to post comments.
- j) The parish council's social media accounts will not be used for playing games, adding applications or for any personal benefit.
- k) Sending any posts or messages via social media accounts that raise issues/questions/comments will not be considered as contacting the parish council for official purposes, and therefore respondents should contact the parish council direct via email or post in order to receive an official response. The parish council will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through social media sites. However, if any matters raised on social media sites are relevant and need to be discussed by the parish council then further information will be sought and brought to the council meeting.
- l) Social media sites will not be monitored continuously.

### Employees

- i) Employees should not use their own personal social media accounts during working periods and should not use parish council IT equipment to access at any time
- ii) Employees in relation to their own personal social media accounts:
- Must not use in relation to any council business
  - Must not post disparaging/defamatory statements about the parish council or stakeholders
  - Make it clear they are speaking on their own behalf
  - Must not post comments about sensitive community topics ie planning applications
  - Should not post anything considered discriminatory, bullying, harassing of any individual as this may reflect on the parish council

### Volunteers

- Must not post disparaging/defamatory statements about the parish council or stakeholders
- Make it clear they are speaking on their own behalf
- Must not post comments about sensitive community topics ie planning applications
- Should not post anything considered discriminatory, bullying, harassing of any individual as this may reflect on the parish council
- May promote parish council events/activities, but must gain approval from the parish council or the Clerk in the first instance

### Councillors

When using personal social media sites Councillors should not use the term Councillor or give the impression, directly or implied, that they are writing on behalf of the parish council. However, whilst the parish council cannot regulate what councillors put on social media in their personal capacity, if councillors post on their individual social media accounts anything that relates to council business, inferring that they are acting as a councillor when making such a post, they must have the parish council's approval to do so either via a parish council meeting or the Clerk. Councillors need to be mindful of the council's Code of Conduct and members obligations and should not bring the parish council into disrepute.

However, in relation to personal social media sites the parish council advise the following:

- i) In a profile/biography/post where the Councillor is identified as a Councillor then it should state that the views expressed are those of the Councillor in question and may not represent the views of the parish council.
- ii) Remember that people classified as "Friends" have the ability to download and share your information with others.
- iii) Set your profile's security and privacy settings carefully eg preferably to "only friends".
- iv) Post only what you want the world to see.
- v) Only add statements that apply to Council business approved at a parish council meeting or by the Clerk.
- vi) Do not make commitments or engage in an activity on behalf of the Council unless authorised to do so.
- vii) Do not disclose parish council confidential matters or criticise council policies or persons.
- viii) Should adhere to the Council's data protection policies and not disclose personal or sensitive information relating to residents, contractors, suppliers or other personnel data (ie belonging to other local authorities or organisations) in respect of Council business and activities.
- ix) When commenting on matters relating to the parish council, Councillors should not make anonymous posts nor use a pseudonym when making such comments so as to hide their identity
- x) Councillors are personally responsible for the content which they publish on any social media outlet and need to be aware of content that could be considered libel. Therefore, it is best not to use commentary deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, libellous and exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colourful language, assumptions or characterisations. It is advisable to treat others with respect and avoid personal attacks.
- xi) Consider whether a post puts your effectiveness at the parish council at risk.
- xii) Councillors must comply with equality laws.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Last Review Date: 2022