



LAVENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Social Media Policy

1. Introduction

Lavenham Parish Council recognises that social media provides a unique opportunity to participate in interactive discussions and share information using for example, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and blogs. The Clerk and Councillors are likely to use social media in a private capacity outside of Council business.

The Clerk's and Councillors' use of social media in both a personal and Council capacity can present risks to our confidential information and reputation, and can jeopardise our compliance with legal obligations. To minimise these risks, we expect the Clerk and Councillors to adhere to this policy.

The purpose of this policy is to assist the Clerk and Councillors by providing clear guidance about acceptable behaviour on social media.

2. Posting by the Parish Council

Lavenham Parish Council will post on Facebook but will not respond to Facebook posts.

Lavenham Parish Council recognises that Facebook can be an excellent way of communicating with Members of the Public. Council considers that the best discussions are sustained pieces of writing and conversation and therefore invites correspondence and attendance at its meetings.

3. Posting by the Clerk or Councillors

Lavenham Parish Council believes that Social Media such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), or any website where you can contribute or edit content and instant messaging services such as email and WhatsApp facilitate Councillors to both hear the opinions of their community and disseminate their opinions.

Lavenham Parish Council values freedom of speech, however the Clerk and Councillors must be respectful to other people even if they disagree with their opinion remembering that they must be accountable for any impact it has on others.

The Clerk and Councillors are expected, at all times, to exhibit generous behaviours.

Councillors must avoid:

- Making or endorsing false or misleading statements about the Council, the Clerk or its Contractors.
- Presenting personal opinions as that of the Parish Council.
- Disclosing commercially sensitive, personal private or confidential information including that covered by GDPR. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with the Clerk.
- Conducting any online activity that is against regulation or law e.g. activity which may be deemed libellous or constituting a criminal offence.
- Engaging in personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications as these may constitute bullying or harassment and could bring the Parish Council into disrepute.
- Endorsing postings by others which could be viewed as malicious, abusive, offensive, threatening or intimidating or could be seen as bullying or harassment.

Councillors are advised to avoid:

- Bringing the Parish Council into disrepute or causing embarrassment, including through content posted in a personal capacity.
- Posting, forwarding or linking to controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks, or 'liking' (or otherwise approving of) such remarks.
- Posting their opinions prior to a meeting of the Parish Council and therefore giving rise to suggestions of predetermination.

Examples of good practice:

- Being honest and open yet being mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the Parish Council.
- Considering not only the legal position (i.e. whether there is a defence in law) in respect of an action but its likely outcome and impacts on others.
- Not escalating heated discussions; trying to be conciliatory, respectful and quoting facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.
- Offering routes to enable resolution of concerns and complaints e.g., how to report to Babergh District Council and other statutory bodies.
- Considering the privacy of others and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g., politics and religion.

Document control

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