

# REACH

## PARISH COUNCIL

### Social Media Policy

#### 1. Parish Council Use of Social Media – Principles

- a. To publish information about the work of Reach Parish Council (“the Parish Council”)
- b. To avoid entering into online debates or arguments about the Parish Council’s work.

#### 2. Approved Parish Council Social Media

The Parish Council has approved the use of Facebook, the Village website and the Village email list to promote the work of the Parish Council and to communicate approved messages by the Chair and/or the Clerk.

Our Parish Council Facebook profile can be found at :

<https://www.facebook.com/reach.parishcouncil.7>

Our page on the Village website can be found at: [http://www.reach-village.co.uk/parish\\_council.html](http://www.reach-village.co.uk/parish_council.html)

#### 3. Users of Parish Council Social Media

In accordance with the Council’s Communication Policy, the Clerk is the Council’s nominated Press Officer with the authority to issue official press releases once they have been approved by the Chair.

The Parish Council has appointed Cllr de Giorgio-Miller to post messages on to our Facebook page that have been approved by the Clerk and the Chair.

#### 4. Guidance for Parish Councillors on the use of Parish Council Social Media

- a. Councillors and Officers should be familiar with the terms of use on third party websites – e.g. Facebook – and adhere to these at all times. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
- b. No information should be published that is not already known to be in the public domain (e.g. available on the Parish Council’s website, published in Minutes) without the prior approval of the Clerk and Chair. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
- c. Information that is published should be factual, fair, thorough and transparent.
- d. Everyone must be mindful that information published in this way may stay in the public domain <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> indefinitely, without the opportunity for retrieval/deletion. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
- e. Copyright laws must be respected.
- f. Conversations or reports that are meant to be private or internal must not be published without permission. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
- g. Other organisations should not be referenced without their approval – when referencing, link back to the original source wherever possible. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
- h. Do not publish anything that would be regarded in the workplace as unacceptable.
- i. Officers and Councillors must remember that they will be seen as ambassadors for the Parish Council, and should always act in a responsible and socially aware manner. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

- j. Residents and Councillors should note that not all communication requires a response. 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 Councillors. The poster shall be informed via the page or direct message that this is the case. When this is necessary the item will be placed on the next available agenda. Any response will then be included in the minutes of the meeting.

**5. Third party Social Media and Individual Councillor Usage**

Councillors and officers need to think about whether they are acting in a private capacity, or whether any impression might be conveyed that they are acting for and on behalf of Reach Parish Council. The Council had adopted a Code of Conduct which is binding on all members. If you use Social Media in your official capacity as a Councillor or Officer, you should always be mindful of the Code, and of the seven Nolan principles applicable to holding public office – selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Parish councillors and council staff must not:

- hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms
- present personal opinions as that of the council
- present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to the council
- post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the council
- post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks
- engage in personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications
- use an individual's name unless given written permission to do so
- publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
- post any information that infringes copyright of others
- post any information that may be deemed libel
- post online activity that constitutes bullying or harassment
- bring the council into disrepute, including through content posted in a personal capacity
- post offensive language relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief
- conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence

**6. Social Media misuse**

- a. Publishing untrue statements about a person which is damaging to their reputation is libel and can result in a court action and fine for damages.
- b. This also applies if someone else publishes something libellous on your social media site. A successful libel claim will result in an award of damages against you.
- c. Posting copyright images or text on social media sites is an offence. Breach of copyright will result in an award of damages against you.
- d. Publishing personal data of individuals without permission is a breach of Data Protection legislation is an offence.
- e. Publication of obscene material is a criminal offence and is subject to a custodial sentence.
- f. Councillors views posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the council at a council or committee meeting may constitute Pre-disposition, Pre- determination or Bias and may require the individual to declare an interest at council meetings.
- g. Anyone with concerns regarding content placed on social media sites that denigrate parish councillors, council staff or residents should report them to the Clerk of the Council.
- h. Misuse of social media content that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.

Date adopted: March 2018