



SOUTHAM PARISH COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Purpose of this policy

The aim of this policy is to establish a Code of Practice for the use of social media by the Councillors and Clerk of Southam Parish Council.

What is social media?

Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing information online. This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):

- Southam Today website
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Youtube and other video clip and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- Blogs and discussion forums
- Email

Why should Southam Parish Council use social media?

When used effectively social media can improve communication with parishioners and the wider population and increase awareness of issues and projects that the Parish Council is involved in. It can also act as a wider information source by linking to and sharing information from social media of other organisations and tiers of local government.

Under the Transparency Code the Council is expected to use and maintain a website in order to share and display information to parishioners.

In addition to social media the Parish Council uses and actively promotes the use of noticeboards, newsletters, email and face to face communication.

What we use social media for:

- Circulating parish council agendas, minutes and dates of meetings.
- Advertising events and activities
- Announcing new information
- Promoting links with and sharing information from community organisations and groups
- Advertising parish council vacancies
- Sharing information, links and press releases from partner agencies such as Principal Authorities, Police, Health authorities etc
- Posting or sharing information from neighbouring parishes
- Providing a range of methods of contact by residents for parish related issues
- Circulating emergency information

Roles of councillors and clerk:

When using social media both parish councillors and the clerk must be mindful of the information they post. The views of individual councillors posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the Parish Council at a council meeting may constitute predisposition, pre-determination or bias and may require the individual to declare an interest at the meeting. It must be clear that any individual's comments are their own and not those of the Parish Council.

The Clerk must refrain from posting about forthcoming parish council business, contractors and any other sensitive information.

No confidential information about the Council, its Councillors or Clerk should be shared on social media.

Any content should be accurate, objective, balanced and informative, complying with the Parish Council's own code of conduct.

Anyone who has concerns regarding social media content should report this in the first instance to the Clerk or, in their absence, to the Chair of the Parish Council.

Restriction on use of Social Media Councillors and the Clerk must not:

- Hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms
- Present personal opinions as that of the Parish Council
- Present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to the Parish Council
- Post content that is contrary to the decisions of the parish council
- Publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
- Publish personal information without permission that breaches Data Protection legislation
- Post any information that infringes copyright
- Post any information that may be deemed libellous
- Engage in any communication that may be construed as 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 which constitutes a criminal offence

The Clerk has the responsibility of maintaining and updating the Parish Council pages of the Southam Today website and acts as moderator for the Parish Council Facebook page.

Relevant legislation:

Data Protection Act 2018

Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

Human Rights Act 1998 – Article 8

Defamation Act 2013

Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

Transparency Code 2015