



Media and Social Media Policy

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Media and Social Media Policy

Social Media

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This policy is intended to help employees, volunteers, and councillors make appropriate decisions about the use of social media, and to outline Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council's position on various aspects of its use, including the management of comments made by members of the public when using Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council's social media sites.
- 1.2 It outlines the standards we require employees; councillors; committee/working group/task and finish group/sub-committee members (referred to as group members); and volunteers to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which we may monitor your use of social media, and the action we will take in respect of breaches of this policy.
- 1.3 This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites.
- 1.4 This policy supplements, and should be read in conjunction with, all other policies and procedures adopted by Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 All employees, volunteers, group members, and councillors are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of our council, its services, employees, partners, and community.
- 2.2 Breach of this policy by employees may be dealt with under our Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.
- 2.3 Breach of this policy by volunteers may result in the council no longer using their services and, if necessary, appropriate action will be taken.

3.0 Responsibility for Implementation of the Policy

- 3.1 The council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
- 3.2 The clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks.
- 3.3 All employees, volunteers, and councillors should ensure that they take the time to read and understand the policy. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the clerk (or the chairman of the council if the matter refers to the clerk).
- 3.4 Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the clerk in writing.

4.0 Using Social Media Sites in our Name

- 4.1 Administration officers and a designated communications lead councillor are authorised to post on social media and on the Council's website. They may delegate permissions to relevant officers as necessary.

5.0 Third Party Social Media and Individual Councillor Usage

- 5.1 Individual parish councillors and council staff are responsible for what they post, both in a council and personal capacity.
- 5.2 The behaviour required in the Councillor's Code of Conduct shall apply to online activity in the same way it applies to other written or verbal communication. Councillors will bear in mind that inappropriate conduct can still attract adverse publicity, even where the code is not engaged.
- 5.3 Councillors should be aware that their profile as a councillor means it is more likely that they will be seen as acting in an official capacity, regardless of their intent.
- 5.4 If a councillor using social media in their official capacity they should always be mindful of the Code of Conduct, and of the seven Nolan principles applicable to holding public office: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.

6.0 Rules for Use of Social Media

- 6.1 When using social media, councillors and staff must be mindful of the information they post in both a personal and council capacity, and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative.
- 6.2 Councillors and staff should not post comments that they would not be prepared to make in writing or face-to-face.
- 6.3 When participating in online communication, councillors and staff must:
- a) Be responsible and respectful, ensuring posts are positive, informative and balanced
 - b) Respect the privacy of other councillors, staff and residents
 - c) Keep the tone of comments respectful and informative, never condescending or 'loud' i.e. use sentence case format, and not write in capital letters or red to emphasise points
 - d) Seek permission to publish original photos or videos (posting copyright images or text on social media sites is an offence, so councillors and staff must ensure they have the appropriate rights to use any third-party content, including images, videos, or text, before posting)
 - e) Always disclose their identity and affiliation to the council when taking part in discussions where their affiliation is relevant, and never hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms
- 6.4 When participating in online communication, councillors and staff must not:
- a) Give out the personal details of others, including home addresses and telephone numbers

- b) Use an individual's name in social media communications or post information about an individual unless given written permission to do so (publishing personal data of individuals without permission is a breach of Data Protection legislation).
 - c) Present personal opinions as that of Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council. If a councillor or member of staff communicates online personally, and not in their role as a councillor, volunteer, or member of council staff, they must not claim to act or give the impression that they are acting as a representative of the council. This could include:
 - i) Sharing web links to official council websites
 - ii) Use of council logos
 - iii) Use of council email addresses
 - iv) Sharing any other council identification
 - d) Present themselves in a way that may cause embarrassment to the council, or bring the council into disrepute
 - e) Make false or misleading statements
 - f) Post personal or political content, content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the council, or post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks.
 - g) Make derogatory, defamatory, discriminatory or offensive comments about any person including council staff, councillors and the council, or about the people, businesses and agencies the council works with and serves, or post any online activity that constitutes bullying or harassment.
 - h) Engage in personal attacks, online fights, hostile communications or in any way allow interaction on social media to damage their working relationships with others
 - i) Publish photographs or videos of minors or members of the public without their permission
 - k) Post any information that may be deemed libel
 - l) Post obscene material
 - m) Conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence
 - n) Bring the council into disrepute, including through content posted in a personal capacity
 - o) Share information that you have only accessed through your role as councillor or employee
 - p) Disclose confidential or commercially sensitive information
- 6.5 Councillors views posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the council or at a committee meeting may constitute pre-disposition, predetermination or bias, and may require the individual to declare an interest at council meetings.
- 6.6 Anyone with concerns regarding content placed on social media sites that denigrate parish councillors, council staff or residents should report them to the parish clerk.

7.0 Monitoring Use of Social Media Websites

- 7.1 Employees should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for council purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken against employees under our Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure. Monitoring will be conducted in compliance with data protection regulations and privacy laws.
- 7.2 Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and us. In particular, a serious case of uploading, posting, forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will probably amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):
- a) Pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films, and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature)
 - b) A false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation
 - c) Material which is offensive or obscene
 - d) Criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the council, councillors, or our employees
 - e) Confidential information about the council or anyone else
 - f) Any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for you or the council)
 - g) Material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person
- 7.3 Any such action will be addressed under the Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure and for employees may result in summary dismissal.
- 7.4 Where evidence of misuse is found we may undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with our Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure, involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or managers involved in the investigation. If necessary, such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.
- 7.5 If social media use by councillors, employees, volunteers, or group members is in breach of this policy please report it to the clerk (or the chairman, if the matter refers to the clerk).

Media

8.0 Introduction

- 8.1 Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council (“the council”) is committed to the provision of accurate information about its governance, decisions, and activities. Where this information is not available via the council’s publication scheme, please contact the clerk or assistant clerk.
- 8.2 The council shall, where possible, co-operate with those whose work involves gathering material for publication in any form including use of the internet (“the media”).
- 8.3 This policy explains how the council may work with the media to meet the above objectives in accordance with the legal requirements and restrictions that apply.

9.0 Legal Requirements and Restrictions

- 9.1 This policy is subject to the council’s obligations which are set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1986, the Local Government Act 1988, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, other legislation which may apply and the council’s Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The council must also have regard to the government’s Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publication.
- 9.2 The council cannot disclose confidential information or disclosure information which is prohibited by law. The council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the council’s Standing Orders, under contract or by common law. Councillors are subject to additional restrictions about the disclosure of confidential information which arise from the Code of Conduct adopted by the council, a copy of which is available via the council’s publication scheme.

10.0 Meetings

- 10.1 Meetings of the council and its committees are open to the public unless the meeting resolves to exclude them because their presence at the meeting is prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business or other special reason(s) stated in the resolution. In accordance with the council’s Standing Orders, persons may be required to leave a meeting of the council and its committees, if their disorderly behaviour obstructs the business of the meeting.
- 10.2 Where a meeting of the council and its committees include an opportunity for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the council’s Standing Orders.
- 10.3 The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a meeting of the council and its committees (which includes e.g. using a mobile phone or tablet, recording for a TV/radio broadcast, providing commentary on blogs, web forums, or social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) which enable a person not at the meeting to see, hear or be given commentary about the meeting is permitted unless (i) the meeting has resolved to hold all or part of the meeting without the public present or (ii) such activities disrupt the proceedings or (iii) paragraphs 10.4 and 10.5 below apply.
- 10.4 The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a child or vulnerable adult at a council or committee meeting is not permitted unless an adult responsible for them has given permission.

- 10.5 Oral reporting or commentary about a council or committee meeting by a person who is present at the meeting is not permitted.
- 10.6 The council shall, as far as it is practicable, provide reasonable facilities for anyone taking a report of a Council or committee meeting and for telephoning their report at their own expense.
- 10.7 The council's Standing Orders will confirm if attendance by the public, their participation, photographing, recording, filming, or other reporting is permitted at a meeting of a sub-committee.

11.0 Other communications with the media

- 11.1 This media policy does not seek to regulate councillors in their private capacity.
- 11.2 The council's communications with the media seek to represent the corporate position and views of the council. If the views of councillors are different to the council's corporate position and views, they must make this clear. Media statements must align with council-approved policies and decisions.
- 11.3 The council's clerk, or assistant clerk may contact the media if the council wants to provide information, a statement or other material about the council.
- 11.4 The chairman of the council is permitted to speak to the media to provide information, a statement or other material about the council. Other councillors may speak on behalf of the council if the chairman delegates the matter to a councillor.
- 11.5 Subject to the obligations on councillors not to disclose information referred to in paragraph 9.2 above and not to misrepresent the council's position, councillors are free to communicate their position and views.
- 11.6 Councillors in their conduct will be guided by, and adhere to, the Code of Conduct.

12.0 Press Releases

- 12.1 The purpose of a press release is to make the media aware of a potential story, to provide important public information or to explain the council's position on a particular issue. It is the responsibility of the clerk and councillors to look for opportunities where the issuing of a press release may be beneficial.
- 12.2 The clerk or any councillor may draft a press release. All press releases must be approved by the clerk before being issued to ensure consistency with council policy and legal requirements (outlined in section 10), as well as to ensure consistency of style across the council and that the use of the press release can be monitored.

13.0 Review

- 13.1 A review of the policy shall be undertaken every two years (or as appropriate).

Policy developed based on the NALC Media Policy Template Nov 2014, SLCC Model Press and Media Policy 2019 and SLCC Social Media Policy Template July 2016.