

# **Wretton Parish Council - Social Media Policy**

## **Policy Statement**

The use of digital and social media now has a clear and compelling impact on all areas of local government, enabling better and more direct contact between the Parish Council and the people and organisations that it serves and works with.

This Social Media Policy aims to describe how Wretton Parish Council will use social media to improve and expand the ways in which it communicates with its local residents, local businesses and the various government (local and central) agencies that it deals with. It sets out what is and is not acceptable usage of social media.

## **Scope**

Social media describes a range of websites and online tools which allow people to interact. This includes blogs and postings on a wide range of platforms including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Linked-In, Instagram and Snapchat.

Social media is all about sharing information and people use social media platforms to give opinions, create interest groups and to build online communities and networks which encourage participation and engagement.

This policy relates to any social media communication published by or on behalf of Wretton Parish Council or any individual in their capacity as a Councillor.

## **Key Principles**

Any communication is capable of being misinterpreted. The immediacy of social media and the lack of face to face contact can magnify any problem.

Information and comments made can be broadcast to a large number of people more quickly than other media.

The same rules apply to social media that govern other behaviour as a Councillor but extra care needs to be taken given the immediacy and ease of dissemination.

Although social media is conversational in tone, it is recorded, and it is permanent, so content and comment must be accurate, informative and thought through.

## **Responsibilities and Accountabilities**

The Parish Clerk is responsible for all formal communication between the Council and members of the public and along with one Parish Councillor, will be responsible for maintaining the Council website.

Four Parish Councillors are designated with responsibilities for monitoring the Wretton Parish Council Facebook page.

# **Wretton Parish Council - Social Media Policy**

## **Procedure**

### **Social media Use**

The Parish Council will only use social media to communicate, to the local community, items of interest including, but not limited to:

- Parish Council meeting dates
- Parish Council minutes
- extraordinary Parish Council meetings
- community events
- urgent notices
- public information

Items posted on social media will, where possible, have the approval of the majority of Councillors. Facebook posts will be subject to the following criteria:

- be civil, tasteful and relevant
- not contain content that is unlawful, libelous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive
- not contain content copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright or for which permission to copy has been denied
- not contain any personal information, other than required basic contact details

It is not a requirement for councillors to have a personal Facebook account or to use other forms of social media to engage with parishioners or otherwise fulfill their role, but this will often be the case.

Councillors should always spell out clearly whether they are communicating on social media in their capacity as a councillor or as a private individual.

Councillors should ensure that they comply with the Code of Conduct for Councillors whenever they act or appear to act in an official capacity on social media in the same way as with any other form of communication.

Whilst independent communications with parishioners are important in order to engage and be approachable, the overarching rules are that councillors should not make commitments on behalf of the Council, nor bring the Council into disrepute and always respect confidentiality.

### **Social media guidelines**

Treat others with respect - do not use social media to make personal attacks or indulge in rude, disrespectful or offensive comments.

Comply with equality laws - do not publish anything that might be seen as racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic or anti-faith.

## **Wretton Parish Council - Social Media Policy**

Never bully or harass anyone - do not say anything, that might be construed as bullying or intimidation.

Do not bring the Council into disrepute - do not publish anything that could reasonably be perceived as reflecting badly upon or lowering the reputation of you or the Council.

Do not disclose confidential information - do not disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired by you which you believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature.

Consider keeping your personal and councillor profile on social networking sites separate.

Be aware that you will be seen as acting in your official capacity if you publish information that you could only have accessed by being a councillor.

### **Potential legal issues**

**Libel** - if an untrue statement about a person which is damaging to their reputation is published, they may consider it as defamatory and consider legal action.

**Copyright** - using images or text on social media from a copyrighted source (for example extracts from publications or photos), without obtaining permission, is likely to breach copyright laws.

**Data Protection** - personal data of individuals must not be published unless you have their express permission. Personal information in an email or personal exchange should not be presumed to imply any consent to pass it on to others.

**Bias and Predetermination** - Councillors should not say anything on social media (or indeed anywhere) that suggests they have made up their mind on an issue that is due to be formally decided.

### **Wretton Parish Council Facebook page**

It is our intention that the Wretton Parish Council Facebook page will provide timely information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our Parish and a vehicle for constructive comments and suggestions from residents.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Wretton Parish Council Facebook page are productive, respectful, contributors must follow these guidelines;

- be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarity, threats or abusive language will not be tolerated
- differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including Parish Councillors, will not be permitted
- share freely and be generous but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due
- stay on topic

## **Wretton Parish Council - Social Media Policy**

Sending a message or post via Facebook will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and the Council is not obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through the Facebook channel.

Sending a message via Facebook Messenger to individual Councillors will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and the Councillor is not obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through Facebook Messenger.

Any requests should be sent directly to the Clerk of Wretton Parish Council - [clerk.wrettonpc@gmail.com](mailto:clerk.wrettonpc@gmail.com)

or via the Wretton Parish Council website "contact us" page [www.wretton.org.uk](http://www.wretton.org.uk)

Wretton Parish Council reserves the right to approve any posts before they are posted onto the Facebook page. The following comment or content will not be posted;

- obscene or racist content
- personal attacks, insults, or threatening language
- potentially libelous statements
- plagiarised material; any material in violation of any laws, including copyright
- private, personal information published without consent
- information or links unrelated to the content of the forum
- commercial promotions or spam

Furthermore, Wretton Parish Council reserves the right to block and remove any posts that do not conform to the above guidelines and deny access to any person posting such items. Access will be denied indefinitely and until such time that Councillors, by formal resolution, agree appropriately. All future posts will be closely monitored and subject to strict scrutiny.

This Social Media Policy was drawn up in April 2024 and approved on 13 May 2024 at the Annual Parish Council Meeting of Wretton Parish Council.