



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Flore Parish Council has chosen to use social media to provide a modern, alternative means to communicate with residents and businesses in Flore and to disseminate information of interest, around in the village. This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites. This policy outlines the standards which we require employees, members and volunteers to observe when using social media.

The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication, and in particular members of the public wishing to communicate with the Parish Council should do so by means other than the use of social media.

The current Code of Conduct for Councillors applies to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. The Code of Conduct for Flore Councillors can be found at www.florevillage.co.uk/official-documentation or it could be made available in printed form on request.

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Scope

All employees, volunteers and members are expected to comply with this policy at all times in order to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of our council. This includes blogs and postings on platforms including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Linked-In, Instagram and Snapchat. This policy relates to any social media communication published by or on behalf of the council or any individual in their capacity as a councillor.

Any communication is capable of being misinterpreted but extra care needs to be taken given the immediacy and ease of dissemination. Social media is conversational in character and it is both recorded and permanent, so content and comment should be accurate, informative and carefully considered prior to being posted.

Responsibility for implementation of the policy

The council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.

The clerk and designated councillors are responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operational aspect of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to our work.

Social media – Parish Council page

Only the Clerk and nominated Councillors are permitted to post information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our Parish. Social media communications will meet the following criteria:

- be civil, tasteful and relevant.
- not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive
- Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal, private or confidential information or criticise policies or personnel.
- not contain content copied from elsewhere which is subject to copyright without permission from the copyright holder.
- not contain any personal information
- Not include images of young people without prior parental permission to post them having been obtained.
- Be honest and open, but also mindful of the impact the contribution might make to people's perceptions of the council.
- Do not constitute a publicly conducted conversation.
- Do not carry on conversations publicly
- Posts from other organisations can be shared on the Council page, as long as they are relevant to the village.



In order to ensure that all discussions on the Flore Parish Council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's mission and goals, contributors must follow these guidelines:

- Be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarity, threats or abuse of language will not be tolerated.
- Differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including Parish Council members or staff, will not be permitted.
- Stay on topic.
- Refrain from using the Parish Council Facebook page for commercial purposes or to market products.

Sending a message/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.

Flore Parish Council will remove any comment or content that includes:

- Obscene or racist content
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language
- Potentially libellous statements
- Plagiarised material; any material which violates current legislation, including copyright.
- Private or personal information

Councillors, Personal Social Media Accounts

It is not a requirement for councillors to have a personal Facebook or Twitter account or to use other forms of social media to engage with parishioners or otherwise fulfil their role.

As an employee or member of the Parish Council using social media, you must adhere to the following general rules:

- Do not upload, post or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.
- Any employee, volunteer or member who feels that they have been harassed or bullied or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform the Chairman.
- Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.
- Be honest and open but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the council. You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools.
- Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.
- Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory ie politics and religion.
- Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact details.

General Guidelines

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):

- 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.
- 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
- Check you have the appropriate privacy settings for any private blog or networking site
- 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. While your likely view on a particular application may be well known, you need to be able to show that you attended the committee or hearing prepared to take on board and weigh all the evidence, and were genuinely persuadable to a different view, or the decision may be later challenged as invalid.
- Clerk and nominated members to update their knowledge of social media opportunities and legislation
- All Parish Councillors are encouraged to provide content for social media

Related Policies

General Data Protection Regulations

Councillor Code of Conduct

Adopted 21st February 2022

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Chairman