

Introduction

Social media is a term commonly used for web-based tools available on the internet that allow people to interact with each other in some way by sharing information, knowledge, opinions and interests.

Examples of social media sites include:

Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn)

Micro-blogging sites (e.g. Twitter)

Blogs and personal websites

Messaging boards

Bookmarking websites (e.g. del.icio.ous)

Photo and video content sharing sites (e.g. YouTube, Pinterest, Flickr , Instagram)

This list is not exhaustive as social media is a constantly evolving area and the types of social media available may change over time.

Bradfield Parish Council will utilise social media as channel for communicating with interested parties. Parish Councillors have s authority to speak on behalf of Bradfield Parish Council and a designated councillor will be responsible for managing the Parish Councils official sites, including Facebook, Twitter, Wordpress, Instagram and YouTube.

Social media, like other communication tools, is used to improve the public's understanding of the Council and its work, foster and engage with the general public. The following 'rules should be observed when engaging in communication via any social media channel:

- is respectful towards all members of the public
- does not reveal confidential or sensitive information
- is transparent
- updates the channels on a regular basis and respond to users posts
- removes any content posted by other users that is considered offensive or derogatory.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the responsibilities of councillors when using social media and the legal implications involved; to illustrate where problems can arise for individual staff members and to differentiate between using a personal social media account and an official BPC account.

3 Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors updating the social media channels in an official or responding to messages in a personal capacity.

4 Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to enable councillors

- to understand their responsibilities when using social media and what should, and should not, be electronically written or posted
- to highlight the potential risks involved when posting on a social networking site
- to document the Parish Councils intentions for the use of social media
- to understand the implications of using social media inappropriately

5 Responsibilities

All councillors updating or posting have a responsibility to follow the principles set out in this policy and to ensure that there is Council agreement about what is being published and where.

6 Principles

Social media has blurred the boundaries between a person's private and professional life. Individuals or groups who use social media in their personal life should therefore be mindful that inappropriate use could damage their own reputation and that of the organisation/council/committee.

When posting/updating or responding to posts the councillors must adhere to the Parish Council code of conduct –

Use of Social Media

Respect Others

Posts must not contain anything contrary to BPC policies on equality, diversity and inclusion. Anything containing racist, sexist, homophobic, sexually explicit, threatening, abusive, disrespectful or other unlawful comments must not be published.

Be Aware of how Online Posts are, or Can Become Public

Everyone should be aware of privacy limitations when posting material using social media, and the extent to which information can be in the public domain. Whatever is posted on a social media site could be in the public domain immediately or, if initially shared with a limited group of followers or friends, could still be copied and shared or published elsewhere.

Carefully consider what you want to say before publishing anything and work on the basis that anything you write or post could be shared more widely without your knowledge or permission.

Remember

- social media sites will not guarantee confidentiality and
- once information is online, it is almost impossible to remove it completely.

Beware when sharing or retweeting posts, as this could be seen to be endorsing someone else's point of view.

Get your Facts Right

When posting information, make sure it is factually correct. Always post a correction if you cannot retract

Ensure Comments are Legal

All comments must be legal and must not incite people to commit a crime. Comments on social networking sites are still covered by British Law, even if posted using a pseudonym. Comments can still result in legal action from an individual or Police prosecution. This is in line with the Malicious Communications Act 1988. Understand the implications of defamation of character and respect copyright

Twitter Do's and Don'ts

Do

Be factual – write things you know are fact, don't guess or make presumptions

Be professional – You represent the BPC

Be relevant – speaks for itself!

Be sensible: everything you tweet can be seen by anyone in the world. Golden Rule - Don't tweet anything you wouldn't say in public with a loud hailer

Be timely – Twitter is a 'now – real world' app. Something that happened three days ago is unlikely to be seen as relevant

Be varied – tweet about the widest possible variety of subjects that are relevant

Be active – a dead twitter account makes it look as you have no news or are suddenly hiding bad news. Try and tweet at least once a day

Use hashtags # - these help people find your tweets and relate them to subjects

Be friendly – follow relevant people and retweet if good advice / information.

Be cautious – if you are unsure whether to tweet something, then err on the side of caution.

Be sociable – if you get asked a question then answer as honestly as you can, without breaking rules or confidentiality

Don't

Be too informal – this is an account for BPC work related and relevant tweets.

Break confidentiality or be inappropriate – don't make disparaging or inappropriate remarks

Be unlawful – don't tweet remarks that could be construed as explicit, racially offensive, homophobic or unlawful. What might be acceptable to you could be offensive or upsetting to others

Be complacent – always review a tweet before you send it and never tweet whilst angry or upset
Things tweeted when emotions are running high can look horrendous a couple of hours later

Be a splurger – 20 tweets one day and none for a week does not make a good twitter feed. One tweet per day is more effective

Be a know it all! – twitter is all about opinions, and everyone is entitled to theirs, no matter how much you disagree with it.

Be an unwitting endorser – don't retweet anything if you aren't prepared to endorse or back that tweet and its subject

Be drawn in – don't get involved in meaningless / irrelevant conversation.

Forget it's a BPC account! If in doubt, leave it out!

Twitter Glossary

Below is a list of the most common Twitter terms - if one isn't there try logging onto Twittonary.com, type your term in, and get a definition instantly.

sign the hash sign is used to mark a word as a keyword, which denotes a "hashtag". More on hashtags further down the list.

@ reply the @ sign is used to indicate that you are replying to a specific username. For example, if WMAS tweets a question, you will reply with @. this will not be a private tweet and will still be seen by everyone on twitter.

140-character limit Twitter messages are meant to be short. Most people don't even go up to the 140 character limit when posting a tweet.

Block The act of blocking a particular user name from following your tweets. You block someone by clicking on their profile and choosing "Block" on the right sidebar.

DM - this stands for direct message, which is the Twitter equivalent to e-mail. You may only send direct messages to those following you. To do so, click on "Direct Message" on their profile and type out your message, again only up to 140 characters. Keep in mind that you cannot send Direct Messages to people that are not following you, even if you are following them. This is Twitter's built-in spam protection.

Dweet - Tweet sent while drunk.

Failwhale - the whale logo that pops up when the Twitter service crashes.

Feed - your posts on Twitter are commonly referred to as your "Twitter feed", or "timeline".

Followers - People who follow your updates.

Hashtags - Hashtags, such as #hellomynameis, denote groupings on Twitter for popular, commonly referenced items. A significant number of the same hashtag also causes a subject or person to **'trend'** - for example **#brexit** was trending around the time of the EU referendum and when the originator of the ' #hellomynameis' campaign Dr Kate Granger died both the campaign and Kate were trending.

Locking Your Profile You can "lock" your profile so that only friends can see your updates by scrolling down to the bottom of your "Settings" tab on the Twitter website and clicking the box beside "Protect My Updates". This may deprive you of followers who would have otherwise followed you based on keywords in your posts and isn't advised for general use. You would only want this if you wanted to use Twitter, but need to avoid public communication for a specific reason.

Mistweet Similar to "mistell", a term coined by gamers, a mistweet is a tweet that you will regret. You can delete your tweets on your profile page, but everyone on your follow list will still have seen it when it was posted.

RT/Retweeting this stands for retweeting, the process whereby you repost someone else's Twitter post on your feed. You are specifying that it is a retweet and putting in the full username so others on your list can choose to follow them if they like it.

Tweeps/Tweeples A cluster of friends on Twitter. Frequently used to address all of your followers at once, e.g. " Morning, Tweeples!". **Tweet-back** Bringing a previous tweet back into the current conversation.

Tweeter – a Twitter user.

Twitterati The Twitter L33T. This is not a comprehensive list at all, but it is generally accepted that a member of the Twitterati has 30,000 or more followers.

Twitterstream The Twitter timeline, both your own and the public one. Any questions about using twitter – please don't be afraid to ask the communications team!

Reviewed on 3rd May 2022