



Social Media Policy

1. Introduction

We now live in a modern, digital world where the use of modern communication methods should be embraced for enhancing the openness and transparency of local government bodies. The use of digital and social media has a clear and compelling impact on all areas of local government enabling better and more direct contact between Paulton Parish Council, the people and businesses it serves and the agencies that it works with.

Social media provides alternative channels (to written correspondence, telephone and face to face conversation) for Paulton Parish Council to inform and respond to questions and queries raised by people who live in, work in and visit Paulton.

This Social Media Policy aims to describe how Paulton Parish Council will use social media to improve and expand the ways in which it communicates internally, with its local residents, local businesses and the various government (local and central) agencies that it deals with.

This policy outlines the standards we require members, employees and volunteers to observe when using all social media, the circumstances in which we will monitor the use of social media and the action we will take in respect of breaches of this policy.

2. The scope of the policy

All employees, volunteers and members are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality and interests of the Council. Breach of this policy by employees may be dealt with under the Councils disciplinary procedure and members by the Code of Conduct.

3. Responsibility for implementation of the policy

The Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. The Clerk and Chairman are responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks.

4. Our rules and expectation

Most online communities have their own rules and guidelines, which we will always abide by. We promise that all 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;
- Not contain content copied from elsewhere, for which Paulton Parish Council does not own the copyright;
- Not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;
- Only the Clerk and Chairman are permitted, or gives approval, to post material on social media in the Councils name.
- Will be moderated by Council employees;
- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising;
- We will not upload, post or for

- ward any content belonging to a third party unless we have consent;
- The sites are not monitored continuously and we will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received, however we will try our best to do so.

Equally, we expect any communications to Paulton Parish Council to 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;
- Not contain content copied from elsewhere, for which the enquirer does not own the copyright;
- Not sending large volumes of the same message (also called 'spamming');
- Not to contain anyone's personal information, other than necessary basic contact details

5. Paulton Parish Councils Facebook and Twitter

Paulton Parish Councils Social Media pages intend to provide Information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within Paulton Parish and promote positive activities and comments from residents within the parish.

In order to ensure that all discussions are productive, respectful, energised and consistent with the Council's mission and goals, we ask you to 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 Paulton Parish Council members or staff, 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
- refrain from using social media pages for commercial purposes or to market products

Sending a message/post via social media will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes, and we will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through this channel. Instead, please see our contact details on the Paulton Parish Council website.

We retain the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- obscene or racist content
- personal attacks, insults or threatening language
- potentially libellous 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

Non-compliance will not be tolerated and can result in a ban

Paulton Parish Council is not responsible for the accuracy of content posted by any subscriber in any forum; opinions expressed in comments on Paulton Parish Council's social media forums do not necessarily represent those of Paulton Parish Council.

All comments, once posted, become the property of Paulton Parish Council and we reserve the right to reproduce, distribute, publish, display or edit. Derivative work can also be created from such postings or content, and used for any purpose, in any form and on any other media.

Paulton Parish Council is not responsible, liable for and does not endorse the privacy practices of any social media or any linked websites. Your use of social media and any linked websites is at your own risk.

Paulton Parish Council assumes no responsibility or liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred as a result of any use or reliance upon the information and material contained within or downloaded from these websites.

Social media sites may occasionally be unavailable and we accept no responsibility for this lack of service.

The presence of any advertisement on social media pages is not an endorsement of the authenticity or quality of the goods, services or website and Paulton Parish Council will not be held responsible for any claims arising in that respect.

We will not engage in/with, and we discourage posts or comments on, issues of a political nature.

Comments should not advertise commercial products or services.

This comment policy may be revised at any time.

By choosing to comment and/or use any Paulton Parish Council social media site, users are deemed to agree to this policy.

6. Good practice guidelines for the use of Facebook by Councillors and as individuals:

1. As a Parish Council, we have a professional image to uphold and how we conduct ourselves online impacts this image.
2. Remember that people classified as 'friends' have the ability to download and share your information with others.
3. Post only what you want the world to see. On a social networking site, once you post something it may continue to be available, even after it is removed from the site.
4. **Do not disclose confidential matters or criticise council policies or persons.**
5. Set your profile's security and privacy settings carefully. At a minimum, all privacy settings should be set to 'only friends'. 'Friends of friends' and 'Networks and Friends' open the content to a large group of unknown people.
6. All activity on the Council Facebook page must follow the Council's social media policy.
7. Do not post images that include young people without parental permission.
8. Only add statements that apply to Council business approved by Full Council, a committee or the Clerk.

9. Do not use commentary deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary or libellous. Exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colourful language, guesswork, obscenity, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions and derogatory remarks or characterizations.
10. Weigh whether a particular posting puts your effectiveness at Paulton Parish Council at risk.

Social Media – use by Councillors

When using social media sites Councillors should not use the term Councillor or give the impression, directly or implied, that they are writing on behalf of the Council.

Members should, however, be mindful of the fact that they are a Councillor and The Code of Conduct. The Code states that: 'A member must not in his official capacity, or any other circumstance, conduct himself in a Manner which could be reasonably be regarded as bringing his office or authority into disrepute.' Members should, therefore, not post any comment or image which could bring the Council into disrepute.

User's responsibilities

Councillors using social media should make use of stringent privacy settings if they do not wish them to be accessed by the press and public.

In any biography where the Councillor is identified as a Councillor, the account should state that the views are those of the Councillor in question and may not represent the views of the Council. Use of the Council's logo on a personal account or website not allowed.

A Councillor should make clear who they are in the profile of any account and whether they are an authorised representative of the Council, unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as a potential threat to personal security. In such instances, the Council's Parish Clerk must be consulted.

Councillors are personally responsible for the content which they publish on any form of social media. Publishing – or allowing to be published (in the form of a comment) – an untrue statement about a person which is damaging to their reputation may amount to libel.

Councillors must treat others with respect, avoid personal attacks and not make disrespectful, rude or offensive comments.

Councillors must comply with equality laws contained within the Equality Act 2010, associated legislation and the Council's Equality Policy. They must not publish anything that might be considered sexist, racist, ageist, homophobic or anti-faith.

Anonymous postings

When commenting online on any matter relating to the Council, Councillors should identify themselves as a Councillor (for instance in their profile) and make it clear whether or not they are representing the views of the Council. They must not make anonymous posts nor use a pseudonym when making such comments so as to hide their identity.

Councillors who fail to identify themselves as a Councillor in breach of this obligation will be deemed to be acting in their official capacity for the purposes of the Code of Conduct and such failure will itself be a breach of the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

Information protection

1. Councillors must not disclose information, make commitments or engage in activity on behalf of the Council unless they are authorised to do so.
2. They should not cite or reference customers, partners or suppliers without their prior written consent.
3. They must handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the Council's data protection policies.
4. Social media sites are in the public domain and it is important that Councillors ensure that they are confident of the nature of the information they publish. Comments posted online are permanently available and can be used by media such as newspapers.
5. Councillors must not publish or report on meetings which are private or internal or publish exempt committee reports or private papers.
6. Copyright laws still apply online. Councillors must not use images to which they do not hold the copyright. Information shared should be attributed to the source (i.e. via web link). Councillors must respect fair-use and financial disclosure laws.

Adopted 16th May 2017