HELLESDON PARISH COUNCIL

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Social Media Policy

The aim of this policy is to outline the terms agreed by Hellesdon Parish Council on their representation online, specifically on communication channels referred to as social media. The inception of a digital age has changed the expectations of the public and their engagement with organisations. The community wishes to be able to communicate with council online and there is a recognised need for council to be represented on social media sites.

Scope of the Policy

All employees and members are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of our council.
Breaches of this policy by employees may be dealt with by the Council's disciplinary procedures and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.
The policy will cover activity including (but not restricted to):

- Hellesdon Parish Council owned and run websites
- Parish Council Facebook accounts

Use of Parish Council Social Media Accounts

The council will use social media for the following activities:

- Awareness of incidents or planned works that may affect the parish or surrounding area;
- Promotion of Council activities including meetings, consultations and projects;
- Information about Parish Council assets
- Promotion of Hellesdon Community Centre including events run by the Parish Council and events run by parties external to the Parish Council but who are holding events in Parish Council run properties;
- Responding to comments made by members of the public where appropriate.
- Promotion of projects by partnership organisations (such as Norfolk County Council and Broadland Council)

Hellesdon Parish Council hereby agrees that:

- Only agreed personnel may represent council under their social media guise (Parish Clerk, Senior Administrator and Support Officer);
- Representation on behalf of the Council may only come from an official Parish Council account, and not from an individual's personal account.
- All published correspondence will follow council's agreed Equal Opportunities policy.

- Personal information will be handled in accordance with current Data Protection laws.
- No political bias will be demonstrated.
- No personal opinions will be expressed via Council accounts.
- Copyright and libel laws will always be upheld.
- Social media channels will be updated as soon as is reasonably possible.
- The right is reserved to edit and/or delete any correspondence purporting to council which is deemed to be offensive, inappropriate, factually incorrect or in any other way derogatory.
- No photographs or videos will be uploaded without the express permission of any person/s featured.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives, 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 the Council members or staff, will not be permitted.
- Share freely and be generous with official Council posts, but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.
- Stay on topic.
- Refrain from using the Council's Facebook page for commercial purposes or to advertise market or sell products.

Members of the Public Commenting on the Parish Council's Social Media Accounts

The Facebook site is not monitored 24/7 and the Council will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, the Council endeavours to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people or authorities.

Members of the public should not include personal/private information in social media posts to us.

Posting via Facebook 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 these channels. Instead, please make direct contact with the council's Clerk and/or members of the council by emailing.

The Council retains the right to remove comments or content, or where necessary report to the police, 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

- Alleges a breach of a Council's policy or the law

The Council's response to any communication received not meeting the above criteria will be to inform the sender of our policy or send a brief response as appropriate. This will be at the Council's discretion based on the message received, given our limited resources available. Any information posted on the Facebook page not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. Repeat offenders will be blocked from the Facebook page.
If the post alleges a breach of a Council's policy or the law the person who posted it will be asked to submit a formal complaint to the Council or report the matter to the Police as soon as possible to allow due process.

The Parish Council reserves the right to not permit commenting on posts.

Use of Social Media by Parish Councillors

Hellesdon Parish Council encourages diversity within the council and accepts that all councillors have different views that they may like to express on social media via personal accounts.
All parish councillors are bound by the Code of Conduct, and this extends to use of personal social media accounts. The principals of the code of conduct are as follows:
i. selflessness,
ii. integrity,
iii. objectivity,
iv. accountability,
v. openness,
vi. honesty, and
vii. leadership.

Monitoring and Review

We will establish appropriate and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of our social media policy. The effectiveness of the social media policy will be reviewed annually and remedial action taken as necessary.
Where a matter is raised on social media which requires fuller investigation or response by the Council, the writer will be informed that this will be raised at the next meeting and will be invited to engage with the Council to inform that discussion.

Responsibility for Implementation of the Policy

The Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
The Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to our work. All employees, volunteers and members should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Parish Clerk.

Complaints

A complaint raised on social media will not be considered a formal complaint, however the complainant will be invited to formally complain through the official channels and a link to the Council's Complaints Procedure will be associated with the complainant's comment on social media, where possible

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables Hellesdon Parish Council to interact in a way that improves the communications both within the Council and between the Council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.
The Council has a website and Facebook page and uses email to communicate. The Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time the Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur this Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.
The Council Facebook page intends to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our Parish/Town and promote our community positively.