

Social Media is a term for websites based on user participation and user-generated content. Many parish councils now use social media as a tool to communicate effectively with their parishioners, with their Account Managers acting as excellent ambassadors for their organisations.

## **1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

- 1.1. This policy covers the use of social media and networking sites established and managed by Puddletown Area Parish Council (“PAPC”).
- 1.2. This policy also covers the representations of any PAPC Councillor or employee within existing social channels who acts on behalf of PAPC or is using an official Puddletown Area Parish Council social media account.
- 1.3. This policy covers some aspects of personal use of social media.
- 1.4. PAPC retains the right to the “property” of information held in private accounts such as “Linked in” contacts when used professionally and on behalf of PAPC.
- 1.5. Social media includes social networking sites and other websites that are centred on user interaction but excludes email.

## **2. KEY PRINCIPLES**

- 2.1. PAPC’s use of social media is intended to:-
  - 2.1.1. provide a valuable service to its parishioners
  - 2.1.2. Share timely relevant information
  - 2.1.3. Encourage open dialogue
  - 2.1.4. Be honest and transparent
  - 2.1.5. Take advantage of a low cost and powerful communication tool
  - 2.1.6. Supplement other methods of access to services
  - 2.1.7. Promote the work of PAPC.

## **3. OBLIGATIONS AND DUTIES OF CONTROLLERS OF PAPC SOCIAL MEDIA**

- 3.1. Setting Up Accounts
  - 3.1.1. The following should be considered as part of the set-up process:-
    - 3.1.1.1. The objectives of the project/campaign
    - 3.1.1.2. The target audience
    - 3.1.1.3. Why social media should be one of PAPC’s communications channels
    - 3.1.1.4. Who will be responsible for managing and moderating that channel
    - 3.1.1.5. How the success of the account will be measured.
    - 3.1.1.6. That the setting up of any new social media account in the name of PAPC or on behalf of PAPC shall have previously been approved at a full Council meeting and minuted.
- 3.2. Running an Account or Using Social Media
  - 3.2.1. Social media accounts work best when updated regularly with credible content.
  - 3.2.2. Parishioners like queries to be answered promptly as this is the expectation of users of these sites.
  - 3.2.3. The best social media channels:-
    - 3.2.3.1. Are transparent and honest
    - 3.2.3.2. Use a suitable tone of voice which is friendly and accessible
    - 3.2.3.3. Have an Account Manager and a stand-in with the skills and knowledge to manage the account when the Account Manager is absent or sick
    - 3.2.3.4. Are empowering by giving the users useful timely information
- 3.3. Role of the Account Manager
  - 3.3.1. The Account Manager will need to:-
    - 3.3.1.1. Aim to update and monitor PAPC social media at least once a week where reasonably practicable (on Council working days only) and respond to questions and queries in a timely fashion (this should be within hours, or if this is not possible, post a response to say why this is not possible)
    - 3.3.1.2. Make it clear that the account is run or supported by PAPC

---

Puddletown Area Parish Council  
**Social Media Policy – Adopted May 2022**

- 3.3.1.3. Provide clear branding
- 3.3.1.4. Cross promote all other PAPC channels (like, follow, retweet, share etc)
- 3.3.1.5. Deal promptly with any offensive or defamatory material posted on the page / account (using the tools provided by the particular site)
- 3.3.1.6. Make sure log in details are kept secure
- 3.3.1.7. The Clerk is administrator of the PAPC social media accounts
- 3.3.1.8. Pass on any queries that they cannot answer to the relevant person within PAPC
- 3.3.1.9. Ensure their responsibilities are fully handed over to a new Account Manager if they leave their role
- 3.3.1.10. Close the account and delete all the associated information and offering an alternative if appropriate, if it becomes out of date or irrelevant (i.e, if it is set up for a specific campaign which has ended)
- 3.3.1.11. Watch out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on any blog or page and remove them (together with any they are notified of by others) as soon as possible to avoid any perception that such views are condoned
- 3.3.1.12. Report any information they find on any social networking site that falls under the mandatory reporting guidelines.
- 3.3.1.13. Close down any accounts that are not updated, as the nature of social media means if there is no new content the account will lose credibility. In addition, followers of the account will expect that comments and queries are dealt with in a timely fashion.
- 3.3.2. Account Managers should understand that moderating does not mean deleting content that they do not agree with or is critical of PAPC. Calm and reasonable dialogue should be entered into. Only truly offensive or defamatory material should be deleted.
- 3.3.3. Account Managers should note that in many cases issues are user moderated in that another user will present a different point of view as part of the debate.

**4. GUIDANCE FOR USERS OF PAPC SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA GENERALLY**

- 4.1. PAPC Councillors and employees should be familiar with the terms of use on third party websites which are being used and adhere to these at all times.
- 4.2. No information should be published on social media that is not already known to be in the public domain without the written prior approval of the Clerk or Chairman / Vice Chairman of PAPC.
- 4.3. Information that is published should be factual, fair, thorough and transparent.
- 4.4. PAPC Councillors and employees should be mindful that information published in this way may stay in the public domain indefinitely without the opportunity for retrieval and/or deletion.
- 4.5. Copyright laws must be complied with.
- 4.6. Conversations or reports that are meant to be private or internal must not be published without permission of the Clerk or Chairman / Vice Chairman of PAPC.
- 4.7. PAPC Councillors and employees shall not publish any information which is the subject of an exempt item at any PAPC meeting without written authorisation from the Clerk or the Chairman / Vice Chairman of PAPC.
- 4.8. PAPC Councillors and employees must not publish anything that would be regarded in the workplace as unacceptable under other PAPC policies.
- 4.9. PAPC Councillors and employees must remember that they will be seen as ambassadors for PAPC and should always act in a responsible and socially aware manner.
- 4.10. PAPC Councillors and employees should:-
  - 4.10.1. Set appropriate privacy settings for any blog or networking site
  - 4.10.2. Watch out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on any blog or page and inform the Account Manager as soon as possible

---

Puddletown Area Parish Council  
**Social Media Policy – Adopted May 2022**

- 4.10.3. Be aware that the higher their profile, the more likely it is that they may be seen as acting in an official capacity when they blog or network
- 4.10.4. Avoid publishing any information that they could only have accessed in their position as PAPC Councillor or employee
- 4.10.5. Be careful if making 'political' points and avoid being specific or personal about individuals
- 4.10.6. Comply with PAPC's General Data Protection Regulation Policy
- 4.10.7. Use a disclaimer. When using social media for personal purposes, councillors and employees must not imply they are speaking for PAPC. Avoid using their PAPC email, PAPC logos or other PAPC identification when using social media for personal purposes. Where possible a standard disclaimer should be used such as: "Statements and opinions here are my own and do not necessarily represent the policies or opinions of Puddletown Area Parish Council."
- 4.10.8. Report any information they find on any social networking site that falls under the mandatory reporting guidelines.
- 4.11. PAPC Councillors and employees should not:-
  - 4.11.1. Blog in haste
  - 4.11.2. Post comments that they would not be prepared to make in writing or face-to-face contact
  - 4.11.3. Use PAPC facilities for personal or political purposes
  - 4.11.4. Present personal opinions as those of PAPC
  - 4.11.5. Present themselves in a way which might cause embarrassment to PAPC
  - 4.11.6. Publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
  - 4.11.7. Bring PAPC into disrepute.

## **5. PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA AND PAPC**

- 5.1. Although PAPC does not want to interfere in PAPC Councillors' and employees' personal lives, the lines between private and public can become blurred particularly on online social networks.
- 5.2. Any actions that affect an employee's work performance, the work of others, or PAPC's interests are a suitable focus for PAPC policy.
- 5.3. PAPC Councillors and employees should clearly identify that they are not speaking on behalf of PAPC when using social media for personal purposes, or to give a personal rather than a professional opinion. PAPC Councillors and employees should also be aware that confidential matters must not be discussed.
- 5.4. When using social media for work purposes, PAPC Councillors and employees should be guided by PAPC's Code of Conduct.
- 5.5. PAPC employees could face disciplinary action if they fail to have proper conduct on social media sites. This applies at work and at home when PAPC matters or staff members are the subject matter.
- 5.6. Allegations that PAPC Councillors have breached this policy may result in referral to the Standards Process as a contravention of the Members Code of Conduct.
- 5.7. In the event of misuse of an PAPC social media account, it will be shut down and/or the Councillor's or employee's access will be blocked.
- 5.8. Appropriate action under other PAPC policies could be taken as a result of misuse of social media by a member of staff.
- 5.9. For the purposes of this policy, misuse might be considered as, but is not limited to, one or more of the following:-
  - 5.9.1. Using a site/tool for personal gain or to solicit business for personal gain
  - 5.9.2. Publishing materials that might be considered inappropriate or offensive
  - 5.9.3. Behaving in manner which is considered to be inappropriate or offensive

---

Puddletown Area Parish Council  
**Social Media Policy – Adopted May 2022**

5.9.4. Publishing materials considered to be defamatory or to the detriment of PAPC and/or the public perception of PAPC.

**6. PURDAH**

6.1. In the six-week run up to an election, local or parliamentary, councils have to be very careful not to do or say anything that could be seen in any way to support any political party or candidate. This period is known as “purdah”.

6.2. PAPC will continue to publish important service announcements using social media during purdah but may have to remove responses if they are overtly party political.

6.3. Elected members and members up for election are asked not to post on PAPC social media accounts during purdah.