



Littleport Parish Council

Social Media Policy

- Policy prepared by: Su Field, Clerk
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- Review Due by: November 2019

Introduction

Employees of Littleport Parish Council may be able to access social media services and social networking websites at work, either through company IT systems or via their own personal equipment.

This social media policy describes the rules governing use of social media at Littleport Parish Council.

It sets out how staff must behave when using the company's social media accounts

Why this policy exists

Social media can bring significant benefits to Littleport Parish Council, particularly for building relationships with parishioners.

However, it's important that employees who use social media within the parish council do so in a way that enhances the parish council's profile.

A misjudged status update can generate complaints or damage the parish council's reputation. There are also security and data protection issues to consider.

This policy explains how employees can use social media safely and effectively.

Policy scope

This policy applies to all staff, contractors and volunteers at Littleport Parish Council who use social media while working.

It applies no matter whether that social media use takes place on company premises, while travelling for business or while working from home.

Social media sites and services include (but are not limited to):

- Popular social networks like **Twitter** and **Facebook**
- Photographic social networks like **Flickr** and **Instagram**

- Professional social networks like **LinkedIn**

Responsibilities

Everyone who operates a parish council social media account or who uses their personal social media accounts at work has some responsibility for implementing this policy.

However, these people have key responsibilities:

- The **Deputy Clerk** will manage the accounts on a day to day basis.
- The **Clerk** will supervise the Deputy Clerk's use of social media and may manage the accounts in the Deputy Clerk's absence.
- The **Parish Council** will give permission for social media accounts to be created and will monitor the suitability of using social media.
- The **Chairman/Vice-chairman** will give advice regarding individual posts as needed.

Basic advice

Regardless of which social networks employees are using, or whether they're using business or personal accounts on company time, following these simple rules helps avoid the most common pitfalls:

- **Know the social network.** Employees should spend time becoming familiar with the social network before contributing. It's important to read any FAQs and understand what is and is not acceptable on a network before posting messages or updates.
- **If unsure, don't post it.** Staff should err on the side of caution when posting to social networks. If an employee feels an update or message might cause complaints or offence — or be otherwise unsuitable — they should not post it. Staff members can always consult the chairman/vice-chairman for advice.
- **Be thoughtful and polite.** Many social media users have got into trouble simply by failing to observe basic good manners online. Employees should adopt the same level of courtesy used when communicating via email.
- **Look out for security threats.** Staff members should be on guard for social engineering and phishing attempts. Social networks are also used to distribute spam and malware. Further details below.
- **Keep personal use reasonable.** Although the parish council believes that having employees who are active on social media can be valuable both to those employees and to the business, staff should exercise restraint in how much personal use of social media they make during working hours.
- **Don't make promises without checking.** Some social networks are very public, so employees should not make any commitments or promises on behalf of Littleport

Parish Council without checking that the parish council can deliver on the promises. Direct any enquiries to the Clerk or Chairman/Vice-Chairman.

- **Handle complex queries via other channels.** Social networks are not a good place to resolve complicated enquiries and parishioner issues. Once a parishioner has made contact, employees should handle further communications via the most appropriate channel — usually email, telephone or by post.
- **Don't escalate things.** It's easy to post a quick response to a contentious status update and then regret it. Employees should always take the time to think before responding, and hold back if they are in any doubt at all.

Use of Littleport Parish Council's Social Media Accounts

This part of the social media policy covers all use of social media accounts owned and run by Littleport Parish Council.

Authorised users

Only people who have been authorised to use the company's social networking accounts may do so.

Authorisation is usually provided by the Resources Sub-Committee. It is typically granted when social media-related tasks form a core part of an employee's job.

Allowing only designated people to use the accounts ensures the company's social media presence is consistent and cohesive.

Employees should use the parish council's profiles and not their personal profiles.

Creating social media accounts

New social media accounts in the company's name must not be created unless approved by Littleport Parish Council.

Littleport Parish Council operates its social media presence in line with a strategy that focuses on the most-appropriate social networks, given available resources.

Purpose of Littleport Parish Council's social media accounts

Littleport Parish Council's social media accounts may be used for many different purposes.

In general, employees should only post updates, messages or otherwise use these accounts when that use is clearly in line with the parish council's overall objectives.

For instance, employees may use company social media accounts to:

- Respond to **parishioner enquiries** and requests for help
- Share **blog posts, articles and other content** created by the parish council

- Share **insightful articles, videos, media and other content** relevant to the parish council, but created by others
- Provide parishioners with **an insight into what goes on at the parish council**

Social media is a powerful tool that changes quickly. Employees are encouraged to think of new ways to use it, and to put those ideas to the parish council.

Inappropriate content and uses

Littleport Parish Council social media accounts must not be used to share or spread inappropriate content, or to take part in any activities that could bring the parish council into disrepute.

When sharing an interesting blog post, article or piece of content, employees should always review the content thoroughly, and should not post a link based solely on a headline.

Safe, responsible social media use

The rules in this section apply to any employees using parish council social media accounts

Users must not:

- Create or transmit material that might be **defamatory or incur liability** for the company.
- Post message, status updates or links to material or **content that is inappropriate.**

Inappropriate content includes: pornography, racial or religious slurs, gender-specific comments, information encouraging criminal skills or terrorism, or materials relating to cults, gambling and illegal drugs.

This definition of inappropriate content or material also covers any text, images or other media that could reasonably offend someone on the basis of race, age, sex, religious or political beliefs, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by law.

- Use social media for any **illegal or criminal activities.**
- Send **offensive or harassing material** to others via social media.
- Broadcast **unsolicited views** on social, political, religious or other non-business related matters.
- Send or post messages or material that **could damage Littleport Parish Council's image or reputation.**
- Post, upload, forward or link to **spam, junk email or chain emails and messages.**