

Beech Parish Council

Social Media Policy

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Agenda item 9 j), minute reference 22.039 j)

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Agenda item 9 j), minute reference 24.034 i)

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Agenda item 9 j), minute reference 25.052 j)

BEECH PARISH COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The aim of this policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to Beech Parish Councillors, the Parish Clerk and others who engage in activities on behalf of the Parish Council using social media.

In the main, Parish Councillors and Parish Council staff have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failure to comply with the law may have more serious consequences. This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):

- Facebook, LinkedIn, Nextdoor and other social networking sites;
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites;
- You Tube and other video clip and podcast sites;
- Blogs and discussion forums; and
- Email

The use of social media does and shall not replace other existing forms of communication.

The general Code of Conduct adopted by Beech Parish Council applies to social media activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. Individual Parish Councillors and the Parish Clerk are responsible for what they post in both a Parish Council and personal capacity.

Social media may be used to:

- Distribute Parish Council agendas, post minutes and dates of meetings;
- Advertise Parish Council events and activities;
- Announce new information from the Parish Council;
- Promote links to news stories or information on the Beech Parish Council website;
- Advertise Parish Council vacancies;
- Re-tweet or share information from partner agencies such as EHDC, HCC, Police, etc.; and
- Post or share information from other Beech (or local) organisations such as schools, sports clubs, community groups and charities.

When using social media Parish Councillors and the Parish Clerk must be mindful of the information they post in a Parish Council capacity and keep the tone of any comments polite and respectful. Online content should aim to be accurate, objective, balanced and informative.

Parish Councillors and the Parish Clerk should use a disclaimer when using social media to express personal opinions on Parish Council business (or on other subjects where otherwise they risk giving the impression to a reasonable person that they are speaking for the Parish Council). A suitable disclaimer is: "Statements and opinions here are my own and don't necessarily represent Beech Parish Council's policies or opinions".

All Councillors use the social media disclaimer so it's not assumed they are speaking as a Parish Councillor and all Councillors must have two social media accounts, one private and personal and one as a Councillor to avoid any confusion.

The use of the Parish Council e-mail address, logos or other Parish Council identification should be avoided on communications not connected with Parish Council business.

Parish Councillors' views posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the Parish Council at a Council or committee meeting may constitute pre-disposition, pre-determination or bias and may require the individual to declare an interest at Council meetings.

Anyone with concerns regarding content placed on social media that denigrates Parish Councillors, the Parish Clerk or members of the public should report them to the Parish Clerk.

When using social media Parish Councillors and the Parish Clerk must not:

- Hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms;
- Present personal opinions as those of the Parish Council;
- Present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to the Parish Council;
- Post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the Parish Council;
- Post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks;
- Engage in personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications;
- Reveal an individual's name unless given written permission to do so;
- [Reveal the email address of any other Parish Councillor without their written permission;]
- Publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission;
- Post any information that infringes the copyright of others;
- Post any information that may be deemed libellous;
- Post online activity that constitutes bullying or harassment;
- Bring the Parish Council into disrepute, including through content posted in a personal capacity;
- Post offensive language relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief;
- Conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence;
- Publish untrue statements about a person which is damaging to their reputation as doing so is libellous and can result in a court action and a fine for damages;
- Post copyrighted images or text on social media as it is an offence to do so. Breach of copyright will result in an award of damages against you;
- Publish personal data of individuals without permission as this is a breach of Data Protection legislation and is an offence; and
- Publish obscene material as it is a criminal offence and is subject to a custodial sentence.

Misuse of social media content that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Signed...Kim Eakers.....

Chairman Beech Parish Council

Date.....12th May 2025...

