

SUTTON-IN-CRAVEN PARISH COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to Sutton Parish Councillors, Staff and others who engage with the Parish Council using online communications referred to as social media.

Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet. This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):

- Parish Council Website
- Parish Council Emails
- Facebook and other social networking sites
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites
- Youtube and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- Blogs and discussion forums

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

Application of this policy

The principles of this policy apply to Sutton-in-Craven Parish Councillors and its Staff. It also applies to others communicating with the Parish Council.

This policy sits alongside relevant existing Sutton-in-Craven policies which need to be taken into consideration when considering this policy.

The current Code of Conduct for Sutton-in-Craven Parish Council applies to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication.

Individual Sutton-in-Craven Parish Councillors and Staff are responsible for what they post online in both a council and personal capacity.

Generally, Sutton-in-Craven Parish Councillors and Staff have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failure to comply with the law may have more serious consequences.

Parish Council Use of Social Media

Online content should be objective, balanced, informative, and accurate. What you write on the web is permanent.

The Clerk will update and maintain the Parish Council website.

Social Media may be used to:

- Distribute agendas, post minutes and dates of meetings.
- Advertise events and activities.
- Good news stories linked website or press page.
- Vacancies

- Retweeting or share information from partner agencies such as Principal Authorities, Police, Health etc
- Announce new information to the community.
- Post share information from other parish related community groups such as schools, sports clubs, community groups and charities
- Refer residents' queries to the Clerk and all other Parish Councillors.

Code of Practice

When using social media (including email) Sutton-in-Craven Parish Councillors and Staff must be mindful of the information they post in both a personal and a parish council capacity and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative.

Online content should be accurate, objective, balanced and informative.

Restriction on Use of Social Media

Parish Councillors and Staff must not:

- Hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms.
- Present personal opinions as that of the Parish Council
- Present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to the Parish Council.
- Post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks.
- Post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the Parish Council.
- Engage in personal attacks, online fights, and hostile communications.
- Use an individual's name unless given written permission to do so.
- Publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission.
- Post any information that infringes copyright of others.
- Post any information that may be deemed libel.
- Post online activity that constitutes bullying or harassment.
- Bring the 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.

In addition, the following actions are also prohibited.

- **Publishing untrue statements** about a person which is damaging to their reputation is libel and can result in a court action and fine for damages.
- Posting copyright images or text on social media sites is an offence.
- Publishing personal data of individuals without permission is a breach of Data Protection legislation and is an offence.
- Publication of obscene material is a criminal offence and is subject to a custodial sentence.

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, predetermination or bias and may require the individual to declare an interest at council meetings.

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

