

Abinger Parish Council

Abinger Common, Abinger Hammer, Forest Green, Oakwood Hill & Walliswood

ABINGER PARISH COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Date Policy Reviewed	Date Policy Adopted
November 2023	November 2023

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. Policy statement

1.1. This policy is intended to help staff make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as blogs, wikis, social networking websites, podcasts, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn etc.

1.2. This policy outlines the standards we require staff to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which we will monitor your use of social media and the action we will take in respect of breaches of this policy.

1.3. This policy supplements our IT, Email and Internet Policy.

1.4. This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

2. Who is covered by the policy

2.1. This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including employees, members, consultants, contractors and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

3. The scope of the policy

3.1. All staff are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of our Council and our services, employees, members, partners, public and suppliers.

3.2. Breach of this policy may be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.

4. Responsibility for implementation of the policy

4.1. The Clerk has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.

4.2. The Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to our operations.

4.3. All staff are responsible for their own compliance with this policy and for ensuring that it is consistently applied. All staff should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the Clerk.

4.4. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Clerk.

5. Using other social media sites using our name

5.1. Only the Clerk is permitted to post material on any *other* personal or company social media websites in the name of Abinger Parish Council or on our behalf. Any breach of this restriction will amount to gross misconduct.

6. Using work-related social media

6.1. We recognise the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about local government and our services, employees, partners and customers. We also recognise the importance of our staff joining in and helping shape industry conversation and direction through interaction in social media.

6.2. Before using work-related social media you must have read and understood this policy and the IT, Email and Internet policy.

7. Rules for use of social media

Whenever you are permitted to use social media in accordance with this policy, you must adhere to the following general rules:

7.1. Always write in the first person, identify who you are and what your role is.

7.2. Do not upload, post, forward or post a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.

7.3. Any member of staff who feels that they have been harassed or bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform the Chairman.

7.4. Never disclose commercially sensitive, private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with the Chairman.

7.5. Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.

7.6. It is acceptable to quote a small excerpt from an article, particularly for the purposes of commenting on it or criticising it. However, if you think an excerpt is too big, it probably is. Quote accurately, include references and when in doubt, link, don't copy.

7.7. Before you include a link to a third party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit you to link to it. All links must be done so that it is clear to the user that they have moved to the third party's website.

7.8. When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.

7.9. Do not post, upload, forward or post a link to chain mail, junk mail, cartoons, jokes or gossip.

7.10. Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of our organisation. If you make a mistake in a contribution, be prompt in admitting and correcting it.

7.11. You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools – be aware that what you publish will be public for many years.

7.12. Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations. Never contribute to a discussion if you are angry or upset, return to it later when you can contribute in a calm and rational manner.

7.13. If you feel even slightly uneasy about something you are about to publish, then you shouldn't do it. If in doubt, always discuss it with your line manager first.

7.14. Don't discuss colleagues, members, partners etc. without their prior approval.

7.15. Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion.

7.16. Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact details.

7.17 Activity on social media websites during office hours should complement and/or support your role and should be used in moderation.

7.18. If you notice any content posted on social media about us (whether complementary or critical) please report it to the Chairman.

8. Monitoring use of social media websites

8.1. Staff should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for work purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken under the Council Disciplinary Procedure.

8.2. We reserve the right to restrict or prevent access to certain social media websites if we consider personal use is taking place. Monitoring is only carried out to the extent permitted or as required by law and as necessary and justifiable for business purposes.

8.3. Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and us. It may also cause embarrassment.

8.4. In particular uploading, posting, forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):

(a) pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);

(b) a false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;

(c) material which is offensive, obscene, criminal discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to us, our members or our staff;

(d) confidential information (which you do not have express authority to disseminate);

(e) any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for you or us); or

(f) material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person. Any such action will be addressed under the Disciplinary Procedure and is likely to result in summary dismissal.

8.5. Where evidence of misuse is found we may undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure, involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or managers involved in the investigation. If necessary, such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.

8.6. If you notice any use of social media by other members of staff in breach of this policy please report it to the Chairman.

9. Monitoring and review of this policy

9.1. The Clerk shall be responsible for reviewing this policy as and when required, to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.