**SUTTON AT HONE & HAWLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

Social Media Policy

1. **Policy Statement:** The aim of this policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to parish councillors, council staff and others who engage with the council using online communications, collectively referred to as social media. Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet.
2. **Scope of the Policy:** This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):

• Parish Council Website

• Facebook, Myspace and other social networking sites

• Twitter and other micro blogging sites

• YouTube and other video clips and podcast sites

• LinkedIn

• Blogs and discussion forums

• Email

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

1. **Who is involved**: The principles of this policy apply to parish councillors and council staff and also applies to others communicating with the Parish Council. Individual parish councillors and council staff are responsible for what they post in a council and personal capacity-when involving council business or using council titles such as Cllr, Clerk etc.

In the main, councillors and council staff have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failure to comply with the law may have more serious consequences.

1. **Internal controls**: The policy sits alongside relevant existing policies e.g. Standing Orders, Code of Conduct and all GDPR policies, which need to be taken into consideration. The current Code of Conduct applies to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication.
2. **Responsibility for implementation of the policy**

* The council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
* The clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to our work.
* All employees, volunteers and members should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the Clerk
* Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Clerk

1. **Social Media Applications**: 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

• Re-tweet or share information from partner agencies such as Principal Authorities, Police, Library, Health etc.

• Announcing new information

• Post or Share information from other parish related community groups such as schools, sports clubs, community groups and charities

• Refer resident queries to the clerk’s email account and onward to all other councillors

1. **Code of Practice**

When using social media (including email) parish councillors and council staff must be mindful of the information they post in both a personal and council capacity and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative.

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

Parish councillors and council staff must not:

• hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms

• present personal opinions as that of the council

• present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to the council

• post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the council

• post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks

• 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 written 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

1. **General Guidance**:

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.

This also applies if someone else publishes something libellous on your social media site. A successful libel claim will result in an award of damages against you.

Posting copyright images or text on social media sites is an offence. Breach of copyright will result in an award of damages against you.

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.

No communications from anonymous or pseudonym accounts will be replied to.

Councillors views posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the 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 sites that denigrate parish councillors, council staff or residents should report them to the Clerk of the Council.

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

Whilst the Clerk remains the Data Protection Officer of the council and webmaster, some councillors may be nominated as administrators of some social media sites.

The moderator will have authority to remove any posts made by third parties from council

Date approved

This document may be edited but to be effective it must remain within any existing legal framework at the time of publication.

**SUTTON AT HONE & HAWLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

**SOCIAL MEDIA PERMISSION AGREEMENT**

**PUBLICATION OF PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES**

I, ……………………………………………………………………………………………….(print name) agree to

photographic images of my children being uploaded to the council’s social media as follows;

Facebook/Website/Twitter/Email/Other (please describe)

Signed………………………………………………….. Dated………………………………………………….

**PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL DATA**

I,………………………………………………………………………………………………(print name), agree to my

personal data as listed, being uploaded to the council’s social media as follows:

Facebook/Website/Twitter/Email/Other (please describe)

Signed………………………………………………….. Dated………………………………………………….