BILLINGSHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Social Media Policy
Adopted 12 January 2015

What is Social Media?
'Social media' is the term commonly given to websites and online tools allowing users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. This interaction can be through computers, mobile phones and new generation technology such as i-pads.

Examples of social media websites include:

•social networking (e.g. www.facebook.com)
•video sharing (e.g. www.youtube.com)
•blogs (e.g. www.london2012.com/blog)
•micro-blogging (e.g. www.twitter.com)
•message boards (e.g. http://www.billingshurst-chat.co.uk)
•wikis (e.g. www.wikipedia.org)
•social bookmarking (e.g. www.delicious.com)

Council Use of Social Media

Principles

- To publish information about the work of the Parish Council to a wider audience.
- Not to enter into online debates on the work of the Council.
- Social Media must NOT be used in the recruitment process for employees or Councillors as this could lead to privacy, potential discrimination claims and also data protection issues, with the exception of placing vacancy advertisements.

Approved Council Social Media

- Facebook – Set up page to publish Council information that is locked for editing.
- Twitter – The Chairman and the Clerk post updates on the Parish Council's Twitter feed.
- Parish Council website www.billingshurst.gov.uk

Users of Council Social Media

- In accordance with the Council's adopted Press Policy clause 2.3, the Parish Clerk is the Council's nominated Press Officer authorised to issue press releases. No other member of staff (except for the Deputy Clerk deputising for the Parish Clerk) should be issuing public statements on behalf of the Council.

Guidance for Officers on the Use of Council Social Media

- Officers should know the terms of use on third party websites, e.g. Facebook.
- No information should be published that is not already in the public domain, e.g. already available on the Council's website.
- Information should be factual, fair, thorough and transparent.
- Be mindful that this information may stay in the public domain ad infinitum.
- Respect copyright laws.
- Do not publish or report on conversations that are meant to be private or internal without permission.
- Do not reference other organisations without their approval. When you do make a reference, link back to the source where possible.
- Do not publish anything that would not be acceptable in the workplace.
- Remember that you are an ambassador for the Council and be cordial at all times

Third Party Social Media and Councillor Usage

Relevant Social Media

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Bebo
- Linked in

Usage of Third Party Media in your Official Capacity as a Parish Councillor

You will need to think about whether you are acting as a Councillor, or giving the impression that you are representing your authority. The Council has adopted a Code of Members Conduct which is binding for all members of the Council.

Do

- Set appropriate privacy settings for your blog or networking site – especially if you have a private, non-political blog
- Keep an eye out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on your blog or page and remove them as soon as possible to avoid the perception that you condone such views
- Be aware that the higher your profile as a Councillor, the more likely it is you will be seen as acting in your official capacity when you blog or network
- Ensure you use Council facilities appropriately; if you use a Council provided blog site or social networking area, any posts you make are likely to be viewed as made in your official capacity
- Be aware that by publishing information that you could not have accessed without your position as a Councillor you are likely to be seen as acting in your official capacity
- Make political points if you wish, but be careful about being too specific or personal if referring to individuals. An attack on individuals may be seen as disrespectful, whereas general comments about another party or genuine political expression is less likely to be viewed as disrespect.

Don't

- Blog in haste.
- Post comments that you would not be prepared to make in writing or face to face
- Use Council facilities for personal or political blogs.

Remember:

The Council has adopted a Code of Conduct and if you use social media in your official capacity as a Parish Councillor, or may be perceived to be acting in your official capacity, you should be mindful of the seven Nolan principles of the public life: Selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.