

# MULBARTON PARISH COUNCIL

## Media and Social Media Policy

### **Purpose**

This Policy aims to describe how the Parish Council will use social media to improve and expand the ways in which it communicates with and disseminates information to its local residents, local businesses and visitors. It will provide guidance to the Clerk and the Council regarding procedures and protocol to follow when dealing with the press and public. This includes use of online communications, collectively referred to as social media and the management of the Council's website, as well as the more traditional ways of communicating.

### **Benefits of a multimedia policy**

There are many benefits to using a variety of ways to communicate with our public. We are committed to traditional ways of communication with newsletters, questionnaires, and through our website. The Council uses Facebook as one of its Social Media sites.

### **Press and Public**

In the interests of openness and transparency, members of the public and press may film, record, photograph or use social media in order to report on the proceedings of a meeting of the Council or its committees when they are open to the public. This does not extend to live verbal commentary. No flash photography or additional lighting should be used without prior consent. People under the age of 18 or other members of the public not wishing to be filmed or photographed should notify the Clerk or Chairman and should sit in the area designated for this purpose. The council will do all it can to respect their wishes, but it should be noted that there is not a requirement for anyone to notify the council that they are filming. Improper conduct or any disruptive behaviour could result in expulsion from the meeting.

### **Press Releases**

It is the Clerk's, or other nominated Cllr's role to issue press releases as instructed by the Council. In all cases, where quotations are included from Councillors in the press release, the Clerk will obtain approval from the Councillor. Press Releases will detail the name and contact details of the Clerk. No Press Release should be issued containing the Clerk's or Councillor's personal opinion.

### **The Parish Council's website**

This is managed by the Clerk. The Clerk will, in a timely way, upload the information as required by law such as minutes and agendas, financial and governance information. Additional information uploaded will include news items supported by

photographs. A nominated Cllr/s may support the Clerk in managing the website as and when required.

## **Operation of Facebook**

The Council will create their own Facebook page and nominate Cllr/s and clerk as administrators. They will act on behalf of the Council and not as individuals.

All accounts set up in the Council's name will first be approved by the Council and the Council will ensure that the appropriate security settings are in place.

The platform will be used to share information, but will not enable the public to interact with the council initially. This may be reviewed at a later date.

Information such as job adverts, newsletters etc. may be shared on other Facebook groups.

Social media posts will be clear and use language accessible and suitable for the platform on which they appear. Language will be informal in tone, but reflect the Parish Council as a credible public body. Updates will be timely, addressing current topics of interest and contributing to the public discussion on activities and issues. Updates will be informative to members of the public and other statutory and non-statutory bodies with links to our website. Where possible and appropriate, the Parish Council will post media such as photos.

The views expressed on the social media account will be interpreted as those of the Parish Council.

The Parish Council's social media may be used to:

- post minutes, dates of meetings and agendas
- advertise events and activities
- communicate news stories
- advertise vacancies
- announce new information
- post or share information from partners i.e., Police, Library, Health etc.
- post or share information from other parish related community groups

All communications will:

- be responsible and respectful
- be direct, informative, brief and transparent
- clearly state affiliation to the Parish Council
- never make false or misleading statements
- be the pre-agreed view of the Parish Council and not of individual Councillors
- use sentence case format
- not use language that may be deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief

- avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications
- not use an individual's name unless written permission to do so has been obtained
- not include photographs or videos unless permission has been sought from the persons or organisations in the video or photograph beforehand
- respect the privacy of councillors and residents
- not include any content that may violate laws or regulations, including libel and copyright.

Councillors or parishioners who have concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should report them to the Clerk.

The Parish Council's social media should be checked and updated on a regular basis to ensure that the security settings are in place.

This policy will be reviewed regularly.

Councillors are strongly advised to have separate council and personal email addresses, and adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct and follow the principles of the Data Protection Act, as incorporated into the Council's Data protection Policy.

Policy adopted August: 2023

Date to be reviewed: August 2027