

# BONINGALE PARISH COUNCIL

## Social Media Policy

The Parish Council realises that social media and networking websites have become a regular part of everyday life and that many people enjoy membership to sites such as Facebook, X (Formerly Twitter) and Instagram. This policy is to provide councillors and staff with guidelines on responsibilities of use.

### **Why is the Parish Council using social media?**

The Parish Council's aim is to inform members of the community and the wider local area, through as many communication channels as possible, about what is happening within the Parish and local area and share important news and information.

The Parish Council's social media channel supplement the information published on its website and leaflet drops.

Through social media the Parish Council can:

- remind people of important events and alert followers instantly to breaking news.
- link to interesting and useful information about the Parish and local area published by other people.
- better communicate with those using mobile devices.

### **Use of official account**

Boningale Parish Council currently operates a Facebook account for the promotion of activities and events and as a communication and broadcast tool.

Examples of acceptable content are:

- Marketing campaigns
- Consultation documents
- News feed & emergency information
- Event listings
- Key dates
- Short debates & quick comments on hot topics and relevant news (discussion board)
- Polls and information gathering
- Useful links

The following outlines the limits of their use:

- An official account on any social media website may only be set-up with consent from the Parish Council.

- Once approved, each account will be set up by the Parish Clerk
- Only authorised staff may use these accounts to post online and access to the account is strictly limited. The Parish Council's social media account is managed and monitored daily by the Clerk and is the only one who is allowed to post links to the parish council website, partner websites, 'Useful' links (for example local transport sites etc), links to other Facebook pages, local media e.g. Shropshire Star, and National organisations.
- All information published on the internet must comply with the Parish Council's data protection policy.
- Social media accounts will primarily be used to promote 'good news' and information, supplementing content already published on the Parish Council's website.
- Any Councillor or member of the public who becomes aware of social networking activity that would be deemed distasteful should make the Parish Clerk aware as soon as possible.

### **Facebook**

The Parish Clerk manages the Council's Facebook page. Facebook pages are used to highlight news, make announcements, engage with the community and share information.

Comments posted and messages received on the Facebook page are views of individuals and do not represent the views of the Parish Council.

Requests for something to be posted on the Parish Council's Facebook page should be directed to the Parish Clerk.

### **Social media moderation policy**

The Parish Council's Facebook page is reactively moderated. The Council cannot accept responsibility for the content of any comment.

The Council reserves the right to remove comments received on Facebook that:

- Contain abusive, obscene, indecent or offensive language, or link to obscene or offensive material.
- Contain swear words or other sorts of profanity.
- Are completely removed from the topic of conversation or are not relevant to the item posted on the wall.
- Contain abusive language towards an individual involved in the thread, other organisations or the page administrator.
- Constitute spam or promote or advertise products, except where it is for an event, publication or similar item that has direct relevance to the subject of discussion. Information about locating and sharing knowledge and expertise is welcomed, but within the specific discussion.
- Are designed to cause nuisance to the page administrator or other users.

For serious and/or persistent breaches of the moderation policy, the Parish Council reserves the right to prevent users from posting further comments.

## **Use of Photos and Video**

Only the Parish Clerk have permission to upload photos and videos. The appropriate permissions must be obtained for all imagery.

## **Personal Accounts on Social Media**

Staff need to use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the terms of their contract of employment. The absence of, or lack of, explicit reference to a specific website or service does not limit the extent of the application of this policy.

Where no policy or guidelines exist, employees should use their professional judgment and take the most prudent action possible. If the Parish Council is referred to in a way that is deemed defamatory or confidential information is disclosed, it reserves the right to report the comment and request that it be removed.

Councillors are at liberty to set up accounts using any of the tools available but must ensure they are clearly identified as personal and do not in any way imply that they reflect the Council's view. Councillors should always adhere to the Code of Conduct, the Nolan Principles (Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership), present a professional image and not disclose anything of a confidential nature.

Comments of a derogatory, proprietary or libellous nature should not be made, and care should be taken to avoid guesswork, exaggeration and colourful language.

## **Purdah**

In the six-week run up to an election – local, general or European – councils must be very careful not to do or say anything that could viewed in any way to support any political party or candidate. The period is known as purdah.

The Council will continue to publish important service announcements using social media but will monitor and potentially remove responses if they are overtly party political.

## **Will the Parish Council respond to direct messages posted on social networking sites?**

If appropriate, the Clerk, will endeavour to respond as quickly as possible to all questions received via social networking sites. All formal requests, comments, enquiries or complaints should be emailed to the Parish Council using the contact form on the website.

The Parish Council may monitor forums and blogs to gain indirect feedback.

The Parish Council may post replies on forums or blogs to answer queries or address factual corrections but would generally take a cautious approach before getting involved in contentious issues.

Boningale Parish Council reserves the right to take any necessary steps to protect members of the parish community and will delete any comments referencing the Parish Council, which are deemed abusive or offensive in anyway.

Social Networking Accounts are monitored intermittently throughout the week.