



Social Media Policy

Policy Statement

The aim of this policy is to set out how Scarning Parish Council uses social media to improve and expand the ways in which it communicates with residents, local businesses and visitors.

Definition of Social Media

Social media provides an alternative channel for the Parish Council to disseminate information and to respond to questions and queries raised by residents. This policy refers to the Council's Facebook and Next Door pages. It does not relate to the Council's website pages and its use of email.

Use of Social Media

The Parish Council uses Social Media to inform the public about Parish Council business and activity. Social Media augments the Parish Council website, the Beacon newsletter and other methods of communication already in use by the Parish Council.

The use of social media has not replaced the Parish Council's existing forms of communication.

Social media may be used to:-

- post details of meetings,
- advertise events and activities
- announce news stories connected to the Council or highlight actions taken by the Council
- advertise Council vacancies
- post or share information from other parish related community groups such as the school, sports clubs, community groups and charities
- refer enquiries to the Parish Clerk.

The Council will not conduct business or deal with complaints via social media. These should be emailed to the Clerk at scarningclerk@btinternet.com

Social Media Officer

The Parish Council has appointed a Social Media Officer. The Social Media Officer acts as a moderator of Parish Council Social Media output and is the only person permitted to post content on the Council's Social Media pages. All postings should only reflect content which it would be acceptable to publish to the general public in other Parish Council communications.

The Social Media Officer (if necessary in consultation with the Chair and the Clerk) has the authority to remove any posts made by third parties from the Council's social media pages which are deemed to be defamatory; false or misleading; insulting, threatening or abusive; obscene or of a sexual nature; offensive, racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory against religious or other groups; promoting illegal activity; or intended to deceive.

Guidance

When participating in any online communication the Social Media Officer must not;

- Hide their identity by using false names or pseudonyms
- Present their personal opinions as those of the Parish Council, or that are contrary to the Council's Code of Conduct, or any other Council policies
- Present themselves in a way that may cause embarrassment to the Council, or bring the Council into disrepute
- Disclose any potentially confidential or sensitive information about the Council's business
- Make false or misleading statements
- Post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks
- Use language that may be deemed offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age or religion or belief
- Engage in personal attacks, online fights or hostile communications
- Publish photographs or videos that infringes the copyright of others
- Post any information that may be deemed libellous
- Post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations, or which constitutes a criminal offence

Publishing untrue statements about a person which is damaging to their reputation is libel and can result in a court action and a 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.

Facebook and Next Door

The Parish Council's Facebook and Next Door pages will be used as a noticeboard with commenting denied unless the Council requires it, and it is agreed.

The Council reserves the right to ask users to remove comments or content that includes:-

- Obscene or racist content
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language
- Potentially libelous statements
- Plagiarised material, any material in violation of any laws, including copyright
- Private, personal information published without consent
- Information or links unrelated to the content of the forum
- Commercial promotions

Sending a message/post via the Council's Facebook and/or Next Door pages will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes. We will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through these channels.

The Council's response to any communication received in such a manner will be to either ignore, inform the sender of our policy, or send a brief response as applicable. This will be at the Council's discretion based on the message received and given our limited available resources. If the post alleges a breach of a Council policy or the law, the person who posted it will be asked to submit a formal complaint to the Council using its Complaints Procedure, or to report the matter to the Police.

The sites are not monitored 24/7 and we will not always be able to reply individually to messages or comments received. However, we will endeavour to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the Council. No personal/private information should be included in any social media posts.

Reporting

The Social Media Officer will make a monthly report to the Parish Council. The report will form part of the Minutes of each meeting and will include any matters raised on social media which the Social Media Officer feels should be brought to the Council's attention. The Council will vote and take action on such matters as necessary.

Monitoring and Review

The Social Media policy was approved at the Council's meeting held on July 19 2021.

It was reviewed and amended at the Council's meeting held on 21 August 2023.

The next date of review is January 2025, or earlier if circumstances require.