



# Sway Parish Council

Jubilee Field Pavilion, Station Road, Sway, SO41 6BE  
01590 718116  
clerk@sway-pc.gov.uk

*Created: Sept 2018*  
*Adopted: Sept 2018*  
*Next review: May 2019*

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sway Parish Council (SPC) recognises that having a social media presence offers the following opportunities:

- Creating an engaged audience who are receptive to receiving information from SPC
- Providing and exchanging information in an environment that allows for the easy sharing of information
- Supporting local democracy
- Gathering community insights and managing relationships with our parish residents
- Promoting cultural events or tourism for the area
- Supporting community cohesion, neighbourliness and resilience

1.2 This policy outlines the standards that the Council requires Cllrs and staff to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which the Council will monitor the use of social media and the action to be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.

1.3 This policy should be read in conjunction with all other SPC policies and procedures, such as Standing Orders, Data Protection Policy, Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure and Members Code of Conduct.

1.4 This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

1.5 This policy covers all individuals working at all levels within SPC, including all elected and co-opted Cllrs, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk and all other employees and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

### 2. PROPOSED SCOPE

2.1 SPC has a corporate presence on the web, uses email, has a Facebook page and a Twitter account. This policy covers all current and future social media outlets. If necessary, it will be updated to reflect the new arrangements of media outlets.

2.2 SPC will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. We may ask those who contact us for their preferred channel of communication when we deal with them.

2.3 All members and staff are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the reputation, privacy, confidentiality and interests of SPC, its services, employees, partners and community.



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2.4 Serious breaches of this policy by employees may be dealt with under the Employee Disciplinary Procedure. SPC may take disciplinary action in respect of unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually orientated or racially offensive comments by the employee. Breach of the policy by volunteers will result in the Council no longer using their services and if necessary, appropriate action will be taken.

2.5 Behaviour required by the Members' Code of Conduct shall apply to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. Members will bear in mind that inappropriate conduct can still attract adverse publicity, even where the code does not apply. Remarks are easily withdrawn, apologised for and forgotten when made in person, but posting them on the internet means that they have been published in a way that cannot be contained. Online content should be objective, balanced, informed and accurate. Members must be aware that their profile as a Cllr means the more likely it is they will be seen as acting in an official capacity when blogging or networking. It must be remembered that communications on the internet are permanent and public. When communicating in a 'private' group it should be ensured that the Council would be content with the statement should it be made public.

2.6 Reports of any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should be reported to the Clerk for referral to the moderator and/or Council as required.

## 3 RULES FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA

3.1 Staff and Cllrs must not allow their social media interaction to damage their working relationships with others.

3.2 They must not make any derogatory, discriminatory, defamatory or offensive comments about other staff, Cllrs, SPC or about the people, businesses and agencies that SPC works with and serves.

3.3 Posts must not contain anyone's personal information other than necessary basic contact details.

3.4 If staff or Cllrs use social media as individuals and not in their role as a Cllr or member of staff, they must not act, claim to act or give the impression that they are acting as a representative of the Council.

3.5 All staff and Cllrs must ensure that they use SPC social media facilities appropriately. If using a Council provided website, blog site or social networking area, any posts made will be viewed as made in an official capacity.

3.6 Parish Council social media facilities must not be used for personal or political blogs.



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3.7 The Council will appoint a nominated person as moderator - either from within the office or the OS&FWG for posting and monitoring of official SPC content to ensure compliance with the Social Media Policy. The moderator will have authority to immediately without notice or comment, remove any posts from the Council's social media pages if they are deemed to be inflammatory or of a defamatory or libellous nature. Such posts will also be reported to the hosts (i.e. Facebook, Twitter) and also to the Clerk for Council records.

## 4 CONTENT GUIDELINES

4.1 All SPC Cllrs and staff are entitled to interact in our social channels as individuals or Cllrs using their own personal details. Staff and individual Cllrs are responsible for what they post. They are personally responsible for any online activity conducted using their own digital footprint. However, when content is published / shared as SPC, the content should follow the following content guidelines:

- Notices and minutes of meetings
- Advertising events and activities
- Posting of good news stories
- Links to appropriate websites or press page if those sites meet SPC's expectations of conduct
- Advertising staff and Cllr vacancies
- Sharing information from partners i.e. NFDC, NFNPA, HCC, Police, Shared New Forest etc
- Announcing new information appropriate to the Council
- Posting or sharing information promoting bodies for community benefit such as schools, clubs and community groups
- Posting other items as the Council see fit

4.2 All social media sites in use should be checked on a regular basis to ensure that the security settings are in place.

4.3 The publishing of planned content / topics should be agreed between the Clerk and Cllrs. All Cllrs are encouraged to put forward suggestions to the Clerk.

4.4 It is however recognised that the moderator will likely need to respond and react close to immediately. This being the case when acting in this capacity Cllrs and staff should exercise discretion in seeking majority approval from the OS&FWG where possible. However where they are required to participate in online communication in a more timely fashion they must:

- Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent
- Always disclose their identity and affiliation to SPC
- Never make false or misleading statements



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- Not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment. They must protect the good reputation of SPC
- Be mindful of the information posted on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of SPC
- Keep the tone of comments respectful and informative, never condescending or 'loud'
- Use sentence case format, not capital letters
- Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks. Language that may be deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief should not be published on any social media site
- Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications
- Do not post comments that you would not be prepared to make in writing or face to face
- Never name an individual third party unless you have written permission to do so
- Seek permission to publish original photographs or video from the persons or organisations in the video or photographs before they are uploaded. You must check that there is parental permission before photos of children are used and communicate this permission to the Clerk for our records.
- Respect the privacy of other Cllrs, staff and residents
- Never post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations such as libel and copyright
- Spell and grammar check everything

4.5 Cllrs (and residents) should be aware that not all communication through social media requires a response from the Council, although an acknowledgement should be made if appropriate.

If a matter that is raised in any form of social media needs further consideration by the Council it may be raised during either the public session or as a full council agenda item for consideration by a quorum of Cllrs. Again, the 'poster' shall be informed via the page or direct message that this is the case and invited to contact the Clerk directly. Any response agreed by the Council will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

## 5. PUBLIC STATEMENT

5.1 Our Facebook page includes a published statement within the 'about section', as follows:

*"Sway Parish Council's Facebook page is intended to provide information and updates regarding activities and information about Sway parish and to promote positive thoughts and comments from our residents."*



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*In order to ensure that all discussions on this page are productive, respectful, positive and consistent with the Council's mission and goals, we ask you to follow these guidelines:*

- *Be considerate and respectful of others. Whilst differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, vulgarity, threats or abuse of language will not be tolerated.*
- *The sharing of content is encouraged, but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.*
- *Refrain from using this Facebook page for commercial purposes or to market products.*

*Please note that our page is not monitored 24/7. As a result, we will not always be able to reply to all messages or comments received. However, we will endeavour to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people.*

*Sending a message/post via Facebook will not be considered as contacting Sway Parish Council for official purposes and we will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through the Facebook channel. Instead, please see our contact details on [www.sway-pc.gov.uk](http://www.sway-pc.gov.uk). Please do not include personal/private information in your Facebook posts/messages to us.*

*We retain the right to ban individuals and remove comments or content that includes:*

- *Obscene or racist content.*
- *Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language.*
- *Potentially libellous statements.*
- *Copyright material; any material in violation of any law.*
- *Private, personal information published without consent.*
- *Information or links unrelated to the content of the forum.*
- *Commercial promotions or spam.*
- *Issues of a political nature.*

*This comment policy may be revised at any time.*

*Sway Parish Council are not responsible for the accuracy of content posted by any subscriber in any forum; opinions expressed in comments on their social media forums do not necessarily represent those of Sway Parish Council.*

*All comments, once posted, become the property of Sway Parish Council and we reserve the right to reproduce, distribute, publish, display or edit. Derivative work can also be created from such postings or content, and used for any purpose, in any form and on any other media.*



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*Sway Parish Council are not responsible, liable for and do not endorse the privacy practices of Facebook or any linked websites. Your use of Facebook and any linked websites is at your own risk. We also assume no responsibility or liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred as a result of any use or reliance upon the information and material contained within or downloaded from this page.*

*Facebook may occasionally be unavailable and we accept no responsibility for this lack of service.*

*The presence of any advertisement on Facebook is not an endorsement of the authenticity or quality of the goods, services or website and Sway Parish Council will not be held responsible for any claims arising in that respect. By choosing to comment and/or utilise this Facebook page, users are deemed to agree to this policy."*

## 6 PUBLISHING PRINCIPLES

6.1 SPC will aim to post 2-3 updates per week, with at least one informative on Council business.

6.2 Posts will be supported with pictures where possible.

## 7 DATE OF REVIEW

7.1 This policy will be reviewed annually.