

Social Media Policy

The purpose of this document is to outline the Social Media Policy for Hartwell Parish Council (HPC) It covers all social media platforms relating to the Parish Council and associated services and extends to Councillors, Officers and Volunteers.

All Councillors and employees have a responsibility to comply with the guidelines within this policy and attend social media training to understand the benefits and pitfalls of using social media whilst working for/representing the Council.

1. Aims and Objectives

Aims and objectives for posting on social media:

- To ensure all social media posts are RIPE (Relevant, Informative, Positive and Encouraging).
- To keep Hartwell residents up to date with news from HPC.
- Promote and provide information on events organised and managed by HPC.
- Share/re-tweet promotion of third-party events in Hartwell, via appropriate platforms.
- To ascertain the views and opinions of Hartwell residents on various subjects.

2. Social Media Platforms

Social Media Platforms include, but are not limited to:

- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Instagram
- Vimeo

3. Talking about HPC

Councillors shall not represent HPC's views without the explicit permission from the Council. If in doubt – DON'T COMMENT.

Councillors, officers and volunteers must respond positively to items posted by either the HPC comms team, associated partners/organisations, local groups.

Councillors, officers and volunteers must not partake in discussions that refer to Council business, if a response is required signpost the enquiry/comment to the contact us page on the Hartwell Parish council website : <https://www.hartwellparishcouncil.gov.uk/>

4. Responsibilities

Councillors, Officers and Volunteers who operate a HPC social media account or who use their personal social media accounts has responsibility for implementing this policy.

The Clerk is ultimately responsible for ensuring that HPC uses social media safely, appropriately and in line with HPC's objectives.

HPC Officers are responsible for posting to HPC social media accounts, as well as responding appropriately to requests made via social media.

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5. Inappropriate Content and Use

Social media accounts must not be used to share or spread inappropriate content, or to take part in any activity that could bring HPC into disrepute.

6. General Social Media Guidelines

Below are general guidelines for HPC Councillors, Officers and Volunteers:

- If you are unsure of what you are posting, do not post it – remember RIPE. Don't ever post anything you wouldn't be comfortable seeing on the front page of The Telegraph!
- Be thoughtful and polite.
- Don't make promises or raise expectations that may not be able to be delivered.
- Know when to not post -don't escalate things or make things worse.
- Handle complex queries via another channel, such as over the phone or via email.
- Don't engage with 'internet trolls'.
- Although HPC encourages free speech, it does not tolerate any comments or posts from third party users which encourage hate speech or comments which are hateful, derogative, racist etc. Any posts of these nature should be removed or deleted immediately.

7. Safe, responsible social media use

Councillors, Officers and Volunteers must not:

- Create or transmit material that might be defamatory or incur liability for HPC.
- Post messages, status updates or links to material that is inappropriate (this includes, but is not limited to; pornography; racial or religious slurs; gender-specific comments; information encouraging criminal skills and activities; terrorism; any media content that could offend someone on the basis of age, sex, religious or political beliefs, national origin, sexual orientation, disability etc).
- Use social media for any criminal or illegal activities.
- Send offensive or harassing material via social media.
- Broadcast unsolicited views on social; politics; religious or other non-HPC related matters.
- Send or post messages that could damage HPC's image or reputation.
- Discuss colleagues, competitors, clients, suppliers, or any other third-party, without their express written consent.
- Post, upload, forward or link to spam, junk email or chain email and messages.

8. Monitoring Social Media

HPC's IT and internet resources are provided for legitimate council use. HPC therefore reserves the right to monitor how social media networks are being used and accessed through these resources. Any monitoring will be carried out by authorised members of staff.

9. Potential Sanctions

Breaching this policy is a serious matter. Users who do so will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including the termination of employment.

Councillors, Officers and Volunteers will be held personally liable for violating this policy.

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When appropriate, HPC will involve the police or other law enforcement agencies in relation to breaches of this policy.