



## **LISS PARISH COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

Social Media is a term for websites based on user participation and user-generated content. Many parish councils now use social media as a tool to communicate effectively with their parishioners, with their Account Managers acting as excellent ambassadors for their organisations.

### **1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

- 1.1. This policy covers the use of social media and networking sites established and managed by Liss Parish Council (“LPC”).
- 1.2. This policy also covers the representations of any LPC Councillor or employee within existing social channels who acts on behalf of LPC or is using an official Liss Parish Council social media account.
- 1.3. This policy covers some aspects of personal use of social media.
- 1.4. LPC retains the right to the “property” of information held in private accounts such as “Linked in” contacts when used professionally and on behalf of LPC.
- 1.5. Social media includes social networking sites and other websites that are centred on user interaction but excludes email.

### **2. KEY PRINCIPLES**

- 2.1. LPC’s use of social media is intended to:-
  - 2.1.1. provide a valuable service to its parishioners
  - 2.1.2. share timely relevant information
  - 2.1.3. encourage open dialogue
  - 2.1.4. be honest and transparent
  - 2.1.5. take advantage of a low cost and powerful communication tool
  - 2.1.6. supplement other methods of access to services
  - 2.1.7. promote the work of LPC and Liss as a village

### **3. OBLIGATIONS AND DUTIES OF CONTROLLERS OF LPC SOCIAL MEDIA**

#### **3.1. Setting Up Accounts**

- 3.1.1. The following should be considered as part of the set-up process:-
  - 3.1.1.1. the objectives of the project/campaign
  - 3.1.1.2. the target audience
  - 3.1.1.3. why social media should be one of LPC’s communications channels
  - 3.1.1.4. who will be responsible for managing and moderating that channel
  - 3.1.1.5. how the success of the account will be measured.
  - 3.1.1.6. that the setting up of any new social media account in the name of LPC or on behalf of LPC shall have previously been approved at a full Council meeting and minuted.

#### **3.2. Running an Account or Using Social Media**

- 3.2.1. Social media accounts work best when updated regularly with credible content.
- 3.2.2. Parishioners like queries to be answered promptly as this is the expectation of users of these sites.
- 3.2.3. The best social media channels:-

- 3.2.3.1. are transparent and honest
- 3.2.3.2. use a suitable tone of voice which is friendly and accessible
- 3.2.3.3. have an Account Manager and a stand-in with the skills and knowledge to manage the account when the Account Manager is absent or sick
- 3.2.3.4. are empowering by giving the users useful timely information

### 3.3. Role of the Account Manager

3.3.1. The Account Manager will need to:-

- 3.3.1.1. aim to update and monitor LPC social media at least once a day where reasonably practicable (on Council working days only) and respond to questions and queries in a timely fashion (this should be within hours, or if this is not possible, post a response to say why this is not possible)
- 3.3.1.2. make it clear that the account is run or supported by LPC
- 3.3.1.3. provide clear branding
- 3.3.1.4. cross promote all other LPC channels (like, follow, retweet, share etc)
- 3.3.1.5. deal promptly with any offensive or defamatory material posted on the page / account (using the tools provided by the particular site)
- 3.3.1.6. make sure log in details are kept secure
- 3.3.1.7. provide log-in details to the Assistant Clerk and Clerk and make both the Assistant Clerk and Clerk an administrator of the LPC social media in case of emergency
- 3.3.1.8. pass on any queries that they cannot answer to the relevant person within LPC
- 3.3.1.9. ensure their responsibilities are fully handed over to a new Account Manager if they leave their role
- 3.3.1.10. close the account and delete all the associated information and offering an alternative if appropriate, if it becomes out of date or irrelevant (i.e, if it is set up for a specific campaign which has ended)
- 3.3.1.11. watch out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on any blog or page and remove them (together with any they are notified of by others) as soon as possible to avoid any perception that such views are condoned
- 3.3.1.12. report any information they find on any social networking site that falls under the mandatory reporting guidelines.
- 3.3.1.13. Close down any accounts that are not updated, as the nature of social media means if there is no new content the account will lose credibility. In addition, followers of the account will expect that comments and queries are dealt with in a timely fashion.

3.3.2. Account Managers should understand that moderating does not mean deleting content that they do not agree with or is critical of LPC. Calm and reasonable dialogue should be entered into. Only truly offensive or defamatory material should be deleted.

3.3.3. Account Managers should note that in many cases issues are user moderated in that another user will present a different point of view as part of the debate.

## 4. **GUIDANCE FOR USERS OF LPC SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA GENERALLY**

- 4.1. LPC Councillors and employees should be familiar with the terms of use on third party websites which are being used and adhere to these at all times.
- 4.2. No information should be published on social media that is not already known to be in the public domain without the written prior approval of the Clerk or Chairman of LPC.
- 4.3. Information that is published should be factual, fair, thorough and transparent.
- 4.4. LPC Councillors and employees should be mindful that information published in this way may stay in the public domain indefinitely without the opportunity for retrieval and/or deletion.
- 4.5. Copyright laws must be complied with.

- 4.6. Conversations or reports that are meant to be private or internal must not be published without permission of the Clerk or Chairman of LPC.
- 4.7. LPC Councillors and employees shall not publish any information which is the subject of an exempt item at any LPC committee meeting without written authorisation from the Clerk or the Chairman of LPC.
- 4.8. LPC Councillors and employees must not publish anything that would be regarded in the workplace as unacceptable under other LPC policies.
- 4.9. LPC Councillors and employees must remember that they will be seen as ambassadors for LPC and should always act in a responsible and socially aware manner.
- 4.10. LPC Councillors and employees should:-
  - 4.10.1. set appropriate privacy settings for any blog or networking site
  - 4.10.2. watch out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on any blog or page and inform the Account Manager as soon as possible
  - 4.10.3. be aware that the higher their profile, the more likely it is that they may be seen as acting in an official capacity when they blog or network
  - 4.10.4. avoid publishing any information that they could only have accessed in their position as LPC Councillor or employee
  - 4.10.5. be careful if making ‘political’ points and avoid being specific or personal about individuals
  - 4.10.6. comply with LPC’s Data Protection Policy
  - 4.10.7. use a disclaimer. When using social media for personal purposes, councillors and employees must not imply they are speaking for LPC. Avoid using their LPC email, LPC logos or other LPC identification when using social media for personal purposes. Where possible a standard disclaimer should be used such as: “Statements and opinions here are my own and do not necessarily represent the policies or opinions of Liss Parish Council.”
  - 4.10.8. report any information they find on any social networking site that falls under the mandatory reporting guidelines.
- 4.11. LPC Councillors and employees should not:-
  - 4.11.1. blog in haste
  - 4.11.2. post comments that they would not be prepared to make in writing or face-to-face contact
  - 4.11.3. use LPC facilities for personal or political purposes
  - 4.11.4. present personal opinions as those of LPC
  - 4.11.5. present themselves in a way which might cause embarrassment to LPC
  - 4.11.6. publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
  - 4.11.7. bring LPC into disrepute

## **5. PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA AND LPC**

- 5.1. Although LPC does not want to interfere in LPC Councillors’ and employees’ personal lives, the lines between private and public can become blurred particularly on online social networks.
- 5.2. Any actions that affect an employee’s work performance, the work of others, or LPC’s interests are a suitable focus for LPC policy.
- 5.3. LPC Councillors and employees should clearly identify that they are not speaking on behalf of LPC when using social media for personal purposes, or to give a personal rather than a professional opinion. LPC Councillors and employees should also be aware that confidential matters must not be discussed.
- 5.4. When using social media for work purposes, LPC Councillors and employees should be guided by LPC’s Code of Conduct.
- 5.5. LPC employees could face disciplinary action if they fail to have proper conduct on social media sites. This applies at work and at home when LPC matters or staff members are the subject matter.
- 5.6. Allegations that LPC Councillors have breached this policy may result in referral to the

Standards Process as a contravention of the Members Code of Conduct.

- 5.7. In the event of misuse of an LPC social media account, it will be shut down and/or the Councillor's or employee's access will be blocked.
- 5.8. Appropriate action under other LPC policies could be taken as a result of misuse of social media by a member of staff.
- 5.9. For the purposes of this policy, misuse might be considered as, but is not limited to, one or more of the following:-
  - 5.9.1. using a site/tool for personal gain or to solicit business for personal gain
  - 5.9.2. publishing materials that might be considered inappropriate or offensive
  - 5.9.3. behaving in manner which is considered to be inappropriate or offensive
  - 5.9.4. publishing materials considered to be defamatory or to the detriment of LPC and/or the public perception of LPC.

## **6. PURDAH**

- 6.1. In the six week run up to an election – local, general or European – councils have to be very careful not to do or say anything that could be seen in any way to support any political party or candidate. This period is known as purdah.
- 6.2. LPC will continue to publish important service announcements using social media during purdah but may have to remove responses if they are overtly party political.
- 6.3. Elected members and members up for election are asked not to post on LPC social media accounts during purdah.

Adopted by Liss Parish Council on 9 October 2017. To be reviewed in 2020.