

1. Policy statement

1.1. This policy is intended to help Councillors and Employees make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as blogs, wikis, social networking websites, podcasts, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and any other relevant social media websites.

1.2. This policy outlines the standards we expect Councillors and Employees to observe when using social media.

1.3. This policy supplements our Code of Conduct Policy.

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

2. Who is covered by the policy

2.1. This policy covers all Councillors and Employees of South Huish Parish Council.

3. The scope of the policy

3.1. All Councillors and Employees are asked to comply with this policy to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of South Huish Parish Council, South Hams District Council and Devon County Council and Parishioners of South Huish and neighbouring parishes.

3.2. Breach of this policy could lead to a report being made to the Monitoring Officer

4. Responsibility for implementation of the policy

4.1. The Chairman has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.

4.2. The Chairman and Clerk are responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks.

4.3. All Councillors and Employees are responsible for their own compliance with this policy and for ensuring that it is consistently applied. All Councillors and Employees should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the Chairman or Clerk to South Huish Parish Council.

4.4. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Parish Clerk.

5. Using social media sites in the name of South Huish Parish Council

5.1. Only the Chairman and/or Clerk of South Huish Parish Council are permitted to post material on a social media website in our name and on our behalf.

5.2 Councillors wanting to post on behalf of South Huish Parish Council must first receive approval in writing from the Chairman or the Parish Clerk.

6. Using Work Related Social Media

6.1. Currently, South Huish Parish Council has a website but no other social media pages/sites/accounts specific to the Council.

6.2 The website will be updated by the Clerk as/when required and will include the Agenda/Minutes from all Parish Meetings as well as details regarding the Parish, Parish Council Accounts, Neighbourhood Plan and any other information the Clerk, Chairman, District, County Council or DALC deem to be essential for Parishioners.

6.3 Councillors may request additional uploads to the website by providing a specific request to the Clerk. If the Clerk does not deem this essential the request will be added to the next Agenda. Consideration will then be given to the request at the next Parish Council Meeting.

7. Personal use of social media sites

7.1. We accept that Councillors and Employees will use social media websites for personal and/or business use and we respectfully request that Councillors and Employees adhere to the following:

7.2 Use of social media should be in accordance with Part 1 General Provisions of the South Huish Parish Council Members' Code of Conduct, particularly (but not restricted to) 1.6 The reputation of the Council depends on your conduct and what the public believes about your conduct AND General Obligations 4(a) treat others with courtesy and respect.

7.3 Do not upload, post, forward or post a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.

7.4 Any Councillor, Employee or Parishioner who feels that they have been harassed or bullied or is offended by material posted or uploaded by a Councillor or Employee of South Huish Parish Council should inform the Clerk in the first instance at which point the South Huish Parish Council Complaints Policy will come into effect.

7.5 When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.

7.6 Be honest and open but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of you as a Councillor and us as a Parish Council.

7.7 You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools – be aware that what you publish will be public for many years.

7.8 Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations. Never contribute to a discussion if you are angry or upset, return to it later when you can contribute in a calm and rational manner.

7.9 If you feel uneasy about something you are about to publish, then you shouldn't do it.

7.10 Don't discuss any Councillors or Council Employees without their prior approval.

7.11 Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion.

7.12 If you notice any content posted on social media about South Huish Parish Council (whether complementary or critical) please report it to the Clerk.

8. Monitoring use of social media websites

8.1 Councillors and Employees should be aware that if breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken following investigation by the Monitoring Officer to protect South Huish Parish Council, South Hams District Council, Devon County Council, Parishioners of South Huish and/or Parishioners of Neighbouring Parishes.

8.2 Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you.

8.3 Uploading, posting, forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):

- (a) pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);
- (b) a false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;
- (c) material which is offensive, obscene, criminal discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to us, our clients or our staff;
- (d) confidential information about South Huish Parish Council, South Hams District Council, Devon County Council, Parishioners of South Huish and/or Parishioners of Neighbouring Parishes (which you do not have express authority to disseminate);
- (e) any other statement which is likely to create any liability to you (whether criminal or civil) or
- (f) material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

If necessary, such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.

9. Monitoring and review of this policy

9.1. The Clerk shall be responsible for reviewing this policy annually to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice. It will then be reviewed and approved at a full Parish Council Meeting.