

# **HIGHNAM PARISH COUNCIL**

## **Social Media Policy**

**Adopted on 13 March 2018**

**Agenda Item 12**

## **Introduction**

The use of its website and social media has the potential to provide better and more direct contact between Highnam Parish Council, residents and businesses it serves, the media generally, and the statutory bodies and agencies with whom it conducts its business. The open and transparent nature of social media makes it essential to define how it can be utilised by the council, in order to maintain professional standards and meet statutory obligations.

In this document the term 'social media' is used as a collective term for the channels through which the council can publish and promulgate information and communicate via the internet. At this time 'social media' refers to the Parish Council website, Facebook page, Twitter account and email only, but may include other channels in future. If further channels are added, the Social Media Policy will be updated.

## **Use of Social Media**

This document defines how Highnam Parish Council will use social media to improve and expand the ways in which it communicates with the local community, the media, local businesses and statutory agencies with whom it works.

1. Efficient and Immediate Communication.  
The use of social media can provide an alternative to written correspondence, telephone and face to face conversation, and will allow the Parish Council to efficiently provide up to date information and, by use of its interactive features, respond to queries raised.
2. It enables the Parish Council to deal more efficiently with the various agencies that deliver services to local people.
3. Use of social media will form an integral part of its administration and how the Parish Council delivers its services.
4. Highnam Parish Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications, and the Clerk and/or Councillors may ask for a preferred or additional channel of communication to be used. The Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers.

## **Code of Conduct for the use of social media by Highnam Parish Council.**

All communications from Highnam Parish Council will meet the following criteria:

- Be civil respectful and relevant.
- Not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually inappropriate, or racially offensive.
- Not contain content copied from elsewhere for which it does not own the copyright, unless the owner's consent to use has been obtained.
- Not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details.
- Will be moderated by the Clerk to the Parish Council and the Social Media Editor(s).
- Will not be used for the dissemination of any political, business or personal advertising.

## **Code of Conduct for those communicating with Highnam Parish Council**

All those communicating with the Parish Council should be asked to adhere to the following criteria:

- Be civil, respectful and relevant.
- Not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually inappropriate or racially offensive.
- Not contain content copied from elsewhere for which the enquirer does not own the copyright, unless the owner's consent to use has been obtained.
- Not contain any personal, business or political advertising.

### **Responsibility of the Clerk to the Council:**

*The Clerk to the Council is responsible for approving any item that relates to Parish Council policy or opinion. The Clerk may publish this content on the website or request the Social Media Editor(s) to arrange its publication on the website and/or other social media platform. On occasion requests for information may be forwarded to a Councillor(s) for their consideration and response, which will then be directed back via the Clerk to the Council.*

### **Responsibility of the Social Media Editor(s):**

*The Social Media Editor(s) is/are responsible for approving all items other than those that relate to Parish Council policy or opinion. For example purely factual items or those that come from an outside source for which the Parish Council is not responsible. The Social Media Editor(s) will decide which social media platform/s should be used for each item. The Social Media Editor(s) will regularly review the website and where practical within the website architecture update it as required by adding additional pages, content etc to ensure that it is always relevant and current. The Social Media Editor(s) will review the website content regularly and remove any information that is either out of date, superseded, or no longer relevant.*

### Website:

The Parish Council's website is an integral part of the Parish Council's administrative system. Its purpose is to act as an information hub and to communicate with residents, local clubs, societies and organisations as well as external bodies including Tewkesbury Borough Council and Local and/or Central Government organisations. The Parish Council will aim to ensure that all information within the website is up to date and relevant.

The following items may be included:

- Information on village clubs, societies and organisations and events, providing the consent of these organisations has first been obtained.
- Links to relevant external websites e.g. Tewkesbury Borough Council, local clubs and societies, providing the consent of these organisations has first been obtained.
- Parish Council, committee, and subcommittee agendas including relevant documentation.
- Minutes of Council, committee and subcommittee meetings.
- Parish Council Financial Information.

- Parish Council adopted policies and procedures.
- Parish Council members' relevant information.
- Any other material that is called for under legislation or deemed appropriate by the Council.
- Links to Charity Commission approved charities.

**Requests / suggestions for items to be included on the website:**

Other items may be included at either the Clerk's or the Social Media Editors(s) discretion, and any requests / suggestions for items to be included on the website from both Parish Councillors and members of the public should be emailed to the Clerk to the Council and the Social Media Editors(s).

The following shall not be included:

- Articles affiliated to, or promoting any political organisation.
- Commercial advertisements.
- Publicity for any non-charitable fund-raising event.

**Facebook:**

In order to provide better and more direct contact between Highnam Parish Council and the local community the Parish Council Facebook page will be used as an additional method to communicate information. It is likely that this information will also be on the Parish Council website but by duplicating selected information on Facebook it should reach a wider audience more quickly.

The Parish Council may choose to respond to a comment received, particularly if one response can be considered to address a number of similar comments. The Parish Council may permit local organisations to maintain a presence on its Facebook page, subject to the adherence of the criteria detailed above.

The Clerk to the Council or the Social Media Editor(s) reserve the right to remove any information considered in breach of the above. It should be clearly identified that such information and its content is not the direct responsibility of the Parish Council.

**Twitter:**

In order to provide better and more direct contact between Highnam Parish Council and the local community the Parish Council Twitter account will be used as an additional method to communicate information. It is likely that this information will also be on the Parish Council website but by duplicating selected information on Twitter it should reach a wider audience more quickly.

The Parish Council may choose to respond to a comment received, particularly if one response can be considered to address a number of similar comments.

**Emails:**

Highnam Parish Council maintains one email address [highnampc@highnambband.co.uk](mailto:highnampc@highnambband.co.uk) which is reviewed twice weekly. The Clerk to the Council is responsible for dealing with all emails received at this address and will forward to a Councillor(s) or external agency, or respond as appropriate.

**Data Protection**

The Clerk to the Council and Members will treat all communications on any social media platform with sensitivity and confidentiality, and abide by the requirements of the Data

Protection Act 1998. Failure to observe this may be seen as a breach of the Parish Council's Code of Conduct and dealt with through its prescribed procedures.