**NARBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL**

**PRESS / SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

Adopted 7th February 2022

Reviewed 10th May 2023

1. **Policy statement** 
   1. This policy is intended to help employees including Clerks/RFO, part-time, fixed-term and casual employees (collectively referred to as employees in this policy), volunteers and Members make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as the press, blogs, social networking websites, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.
   2. This policy outlines the standards required by employees and volunteers to observe when using the press and/or social media, the circumstances in which the use of the press and/or social media will be monitored and the action to be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.
2. **The scope of the policy** 
   1. All employees, volunteers and Members are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the Council.
   2. Breach of this policy by employees may be dealt with under the Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.
3. **Responsibility for implementation of the policy** 
   1. The Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
   2. The Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to work.
   3. All employees, volunteers and Members should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the Clerk or Chairman of the Council.
   4. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Clerk or Chairman of the Council.
4. **Using the press or social media sites in the Council’s name** 
   1. Only the Clerk, Chairman/Vice Chairman of the Council are permitted to post material on a social media website or speak to the press in the Council’s name.
5. **Using social media**
   1. The Council recognises the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about the Council and community. It also recognises the importance of its employees, volunteers and Members joining in and helping shape Local Government conversation and direction through interaction in social media.
   2. Before using social media on any matter which might affect the interests of the Council employees, volunteers and Members, Councillors must:
6. have read and understood this policy and;
7. have sought and gained prior written approval to do so from the Clerk or Chairman/Vice Chairman of the Council.
8. **Rules for use of social media**

Whenever permitted to use social media in accordance with this policy, the following general rules must be adhered to:

* 1. Do not upload, post or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.
  2. Any employee, volunteer or Member who feels that they have been harassed or bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform the Clerk or Chairman of the Council.
  3. Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal private or confidential information. If unsure whether the information to be shared falls within one of these categories, this should be discussed this with the Clerk or Chairman of the Council.
  4. Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless that third party has given its consent.
  5. Before including a link to a third party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit the link.
  6. When making use of any social media platform, the terms of use must be read and complied with.
  7. Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact the contribution might make to peoples’ perceptions of the Council.
  8. Be personally responsible for content published into social media tools.
  9. Don't escalate heated discussions. Try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.
  10. Don’t discuss employees without their prior approval.
  11. Always consider others’ privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion.
  12. Avoid publishing contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people who were not intended to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact details.

1. **Monitoring use of social media websites**
   1. Employees should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for Council purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken against employees under our Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.
   2. Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against the individual or Council.
   3. In particular, a serious case of uploading, 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 probably amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):
2. pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);
3. a false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;
4. material which is offensive, obscene, criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the Council, Members or employees;
5. confidential information about the Council or anyone else;
6. any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for the individual or the Council); or
7. material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

Any such action will be addressed under the Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures and for employees may result in summary dismissal.

* 1. Where evidence of misuse is found the Council may undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with the Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures, involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or managers involved in the investigation. If necessary, such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.
  2. If the use of social media by other employees or volunteers is in breach of this policy it must be reported to the Clerk or Chairman of the Council.

1. **Council Facebook page**
   1. All Councillors and the Clerk are permitted to post material on the Council Facebook page, subject to the guidance contained within this policy.
   2. Posts placed on the Council Facebook page will be subject to strict review by the appointed administrative Councillors responsible for the site and may be removed at their discretion.
2. **Monitoring and review of this policy**
   1. The Clerk shall be responsible for reviewing this policy annually to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.