

Media Policy

Introduction

The Council shall, where possible, co-operate with those whose work involves gathering material for publication in any form including use of the internet ("the media").

This policy explains how The Council may work with the media to meet the above objectives in accordance with the legal requirements and restrictions that apply.

Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet. This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):

- Town Council website
- Facebook, Myspace and other social networking sites
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites
- Youtube and other video clips podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- Blogs and discussion forums
- Email

Legal requirements and restrictions

This Policy is subject to the Council's obligations which are set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1986, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR), other legislations which may apply and the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information the disclosure of which is prohibited by law. The Council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the Council's Standing Orders, under contract or by common law. Councillors are subject to additional restrictions about the disclosure of confidential information which arise from the Code of Conduct adopted by The Council. The Code of Conduct applies to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. Individual Town Councillors and Council Staff are responsible for what they post in a Council and personal capacity.

Meetings

A Meeting of the Council and its Committees is open to the public unless the meeting resolves to exclude them because their presence at the meeting is prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business or other special

reason(s) stated in the resolution. In accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, persons may be required to leave a meeting of The Council and its Committees, if their disorderly behaviour obstructs the business of the meeting.

Where a meeting of The Council and its Committees include an opportunity for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the Council's Standing Orders.

The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a meeting of The Council and its Committees (which includes e.g. using a mobile phone or tablet, recording for a TV/radio broadcast, providing commentary on blogs, web forums, or social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and You Tube) which enable a person not at the meeting to see, hear or be given commentary about the meeting is permitted unless (i) the meeting has resolved to hold all or part of the meeting without the public present or (ii) such activities disrupt the proceedings or (iii) paragraphs shown below *

* The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a child or vulnerable adult at a Council or Committee Meeting is not permitted unless an adult responsible for them has given permission.

* Oral reporting or commentary about a Council or Committee Meeting by a person who is present at the meeting is not permitted.

The Council shall, as far as it is practicable, provide reasonable facilities for anyone taking a report of a Council or Committee Meeting and for allowing telephoning of their report at their own expense.

Other communications with the media

This policy does not seek to regulate Councillors in their private capacity.

The Council's communications with the media seek to represent the corporate position and views of The Council. If the views of the Councillors are different to the Council's corporate position and views, they will make this clear.

The Council's Clerk, or in his absence, the Deputy Clerk may contact the media if the Council wants to provide information, a statement or other material about The Council.

Subject to the obligations on Councillors not to disclose information referred to above and not to misrepresent the Council's position, Councillors are free to communicate their position and views.

Social media

Social media may be used to:

- Distribute agenda, post minutes and dates of meetings

- Advertise events and activities
- Share good news stories, website links or press pages
- Advertise vacancies
- Re-tweet or share information from partner agencies such as Principle Authorities, Police, Library, Health etc.
- Announce new information
- Post or share information from other parish related community groups such as schools, sports clubs, community groups and charities
- Refer resident queries to the clerk via the contact us link on the Town Councils website.

Social media – Code of Practice

When using social media (including email) Town Councillors and Council Staff must be mindful of the information they post in both a personal and Council capacity and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative.

Town Councillors and Council Staff must not:

- Hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms
- Present personal opinions as that of The Council
- Present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to The Council
- Post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of The Council
- Post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks
- Engage in personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications
- Use an individual's name unless given written permission to do so
- Publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
- Post any information that infringes copyright of others
- Post any information that may be deemed as libel
- Post online activity that constitutes bullying or harassment
- Bring The Council into disrepute, including through content posted in a personal capacity
- Post offensive language relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief
- Conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence

Councillors views posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by The Council at a Council or Committee Meeting may constitute Pre-disposition, Pre-determination or Bias and may require the individual to declare an interest at council meetings.

Anyone with concerns regarding content placed on social media sites denigrating Town Councillors, Council Staff or residents should report them to the Town Clerk.

Misuse of social media content that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.

The Council will appoint a Nominated Person as moderator of Town Council social media output and be responsible for posting and monitoring content to ensure it complies with the Media Policy.

The Moderator will have the authority to remove any posts made by third parties from Council social media pages which are deemed to be of a defamatory or libellous nature.

Signed.....*M Keymer*.....Print Name.....*MARY KEYMER*.....
Position in Highworth Town Council.....*DEPUTY TOWN CLERK*.....
Date.....*11 MARCH 2020*.....
Date to be reviewed.....*2021*.....