

SOCIAL MEDIA AND PRESS POLICY

The Social Media and Press Policy was adopted by Full Council at its Meeting held on 29th September 2021.

1. Social Media (General)

The Parish Clerk is the designated “Council” owner of the Council’s social media channels. Councillors may be appointed by the Parish Council to assist the Clerk to disseminate information. However all must ensure they follow this policy. No account details may be changed without the permission of the Clerk.

Councillors are entitled to use any form of social media they wish in a personal capacity but must abide by this policy at all times when so doing.

The following guidelines will apply to online participation and set out the standards of behaviour expected as a representative of Storrington & Sullington Parish Council.

- Be aware of and recognise your responsibilities identified in the Social Media Policy.
- Remember that you are personally responsible for the content you publish on any form of social media. When referring to Parish Council activities ensure that content is factual and accurate.
- Never give out personal details of others such as home addresses and telephone numbers.
- Ensure that you handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the General Data Protection Regulations
- **Use a Disclaimer.** When using social media for personal purposes, you must not imply that you are speaking for the Council. Avoid use of the Council e-mail address, logos or other Council identification. Make it clear that what you say is representative of your personal views only. The following is an example of a disclaimer that should be used wherever possible. *“Statements and opinions expressed here are my own and do not necessarily represent those of the Parish Council”*
- Know your obligations: you must comply with other Council policies when using social media. For example, you should be careful not to breach Council confidentiality and proprietary information policies.
- Show respect to all. You should be respectful of the authority and employees. Derogatory comments are always wrong.

- Use of the Parish Council’s Facebook account must always reflect the Council’s position / decisions on a matter and in no circumstances must it be used to express personal opinion, particularly when used by a Councillor. If unsure, say nothing.

2. Use of Social Media (during meetings)

Below are some extra guidelines for Councillors to consider for the use of social media during meetings.

- Handheld devices and laptops are permitted for use during meetings to allow environmentally friendly and effective communication. The use of such devices is intended to improve communications during meetings – not to interrupt or distract anyone taking part. Ensure the volume on all electronic devices is turned to “mute”.
- Councillors’ tweets / blogs during Council meetings should refer to the discussions which are taking place at the meeting. Tweeting / blogging about other subjects may demonstrate that you are not engaging properly in the meeting.
- Councillors have a responsibility to take Council business seriously and it is not appropriate for members to use social media to tease or insult other members.
- Remember that if you break the law using social media (for example by posting something defamatory), you are personally responsible.

3. Dealing with the Press and other Media.

The first port of call for all press / media enquiries should be the Parish Clerk or Deputy who will verify the identity of the caller by telephoning the company’s advertised contact number. Requests for statements will be channelled to the Parish Council Chairman and / or the Chairman of the relevant committee and may then be referred to the most appropriate Councillor with knowledge of the subject matter.

The nominated person will then:-

- Respond quickly and effectively to press / media enquiries in an open and honest manner.
- Promote the Parish Council in a positive and proactive manner.
- Be receptive to any reasonable requests for photographic opportunities or interviews if possible.
- Be respectful of the confidential nature of information which is retained by the Council on individual cases or other matters which are officially specified as confidential.