PUXTON PARISH COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Some of the most popular social media sites today are Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and YouTube. The format and level of interaction vary greatly from one to another. Whenever Parish Council representatives use such sites, they are advised to familiarise themselves with the guidance that is set out in this policy. It is important that social media sites are used effectively as part of a wider communications mix, and that their use does not expose the Council to security risks, or the risk of reputational damage. As with any online activity, there are risks associated with it. The following types of risk have been associated with social media:-

- Virus or malware (malicious software) infection from infected sites;
- Disclosure of confidential information:
- Damage to the standing or reputation of the Council;
- Social engineering attacks (the act of manipulating people into disclosing confidential material or carrying out certain actions. This is often carried out by individuals fraudulently claiming to be a business or a client);
- Civil or criminal action related to breaches of legislation.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:-

- The Parish Council is not exposed to legal or governance risk;
- The reputation of the Council is not adversely affected:
- People are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking sites is legitimately representative of Puxton Parish Council.

The following guidelines will apply to online participation, and will set out the standards of behaviour expected of a representative of Puxton Parish Council.

1. **Responsibilities of Members**
   (1) Councillors should remember that they are **personally responsible** for the content they publish on any social media;
   (2) It is good practice for Councillors to clearly separate professional, personal or political aspects of their communication;
   (3) Councillors should ensure that they are familiar with the guidance set out in this social media policy, and that their use of social media is not damaging to the reputation of the authority;
   (4) Social media sites are in the public domain, and it is important that Councillors are confident about the nature of the information that they publish. Councillors **must not** publish or report on meetings or discussions that are meant to be private, contain exempt information, or are internal to the Council.

2. **Responsibilities of officers**
   (1) Officers using social media in a personal capacity must ensure that this use is strictly personal.
   (2) As members of the public may recognise officers as employees of the Council, it is important that officers ensure that their personal use of social media is not damaging to the Council.
   (3) Where officers use social media in a professional capacity to represent the Council, this will represent the Council as a body, and not as an individual officer. This use will be non party political.
   (4) No-one employed by the Council, nor Councillors, must download any software, shareware or freeware onto Council computers unless this has been properly checked and certified as clear of viruses. Nothing should be put on Council computers without the agreement of the Parish Clerk.

3. **General Terms of Use Applicable to ALL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES**
   (2) Social networking applications MUST NOT:
   - Be used to publish content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright data protection or other claims for damages
   - Be used in an abusive or hateful manner
   - Be used for actions that would put the user in breach of Council policies or the Code of Conduct of Members.

   (1) All Council representatives are reminded that:-
   - The Council is not permitted to publish any material that "in whole or part appears to affect public support for any political party" (Local Government Act 1986)
   - Council websites or other online presence must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests or personal or political campaigns of any sort.

Reviewed 3rd March 2016