**LONDESBOROUGH WITH EASTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL**

**Social Media Policy**

## Introduction:

“**Social media** is a series of websites and applications designed to allow people to share content quickly, efficiently and in real-time. “

Hudson, Matthew, “What is social media?”, September 25 2017, in The Balance (https://www.thebalance.com/what-is-social-media-2890301)

Social media facilitates the use of multiple formats, including text, video, photographs and audio. It is multi-platform and accessible on desktop and mobile. It can speed up the flow of information between an organisation and those it serves, and allows engagement on different levels from simple viewing to discussion and debate. Communication can be one to one, one to many and many to many in real time, or on a scheduled basis.

It should be remembered that:

* information posted on social media is usually shared in the public domain and therefore can be seen by anybody anywhere, whether they are registered on the site or not, and whether they are “following” the account or not
* when sharing information, it is important to check sources and accuracy
* copyright applies to images, photographs and other content
* hashtags (a word or phrase preceded by # to identify a topic of discussion) are not always what they seem, always check how one is being used before using it yourself
* it is easy to be misinterpreted and inadvertently cause offence
* never feed the trolls

There are many social media sites but this policy is currently specific to the use of Facebook and Twitter but the general principles will apply to any social media use on behalf of Londesborough and Eathorpe Parish Council (LPC) or by the Councillors or Clerk in a private capacity but concerning SPC business.

## Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to enable those using social media to quickly disseminate information on behalf of SPC and to engage with the community, whilst avoiding the associated pitfalls.

## Aims and objectives

The aim of this Policy is to ensure:

* Engagement with individuals, organisations and communities and promotion of SPC activities and projects
* A consistent approach is adopted and maintained in the use of social media
* Security of SPC information on social media
* That those using social media on behalf of SPC do so operate within relevant legislation and in line with other SPC policies
* That communications do not adversely affect the reputation of SPC
* That all posts are appropriate, timely and facilitate a coherent communications strategy (e.g. linking social media accounts to the SPC website)

## Responsibilities

The Parish Clerk is the designated owner of all the Council Social Media accounts agreed by the Council. Councillors appointed by the Council may assist the Parish Clerk in the management of these accounts. All postings must be in line with this Policy. Account names, passwords and contact details may not be changed without the permission of the Parish Clerk.

## Guidance for use of social media in meetings

Should members of SPC wish to post to social media during meetings etc. the following guidance should be followed:

* Keyboard stroke sounds should be set to OFF
* Mobile devices should be set to silent
* Posts should be objective, courteous and professional
* Posts should be about the meeting only, not personal or on different topics, which could give the impression SPC members are not engaged in the meeting or taking their responsibilities seriously
* Never make defamatory comments, if the law is broken the person posting such comments will be held legally responsible

## Facebook

The reputation and professionalism of SPC must be protected at all times when posting.

* Be aware that “friends” may download and share the information with others, content posted to Facebook may still exist elsewhere even if it is deleted from the timeline
* Do not post confidential matters or criticise policies or personnel.
* The account’s security and privacy settings must be monitored (especially when Facebook introduces changes) and privacy settings should be set to “only friends”
* Images of children, young people and vulnerable people must not be posted without appropriate permission being obtained
* Only the Parish Clerk and approved Councillors shall be allowed full access.
* Whilst standard SPC business (such as minutes, agendas, meeting dates, links to ERYC information such as planning applications) may be freely posted, information about special events and announcements should be approved by either SPC or the Parish Clerk.
* Do not share information which is speculation, defamation, obscenity, proprietary or libellous
* Do not install any external applications that work with Facebook (such as games).
* Any information found that falls under the mandatory reporting guidelines must be reported as required by law
* Twitter

The reputation and professionalism of SPC must be protected at all times when posting.

* Due to the nature of the platform it is not appropriate to keep the account private, however it is good practice to check Follower identities to ensure they are genuine and that their shared views are not likely to have an adverse impact on the reputation of SPC. Remember that the timeline of an unlocked account can still be viewed without the viewer being logged in to the platform
* Do not post confidential matters or criticise policies or personnel.
* Images of children, young people and vulnerable people must not be posted without appropriate permission being obtained
* Only the Parish Clerk and approved Councillors shall be allowed full access.
* Do not share information which is speculation, defamation, obscenity, proprietary or libellous
* Any information found that falls under the mandatory reporting guidelines must be reported as required by law
* ReTweets should only be of posts from trusted sources (such as ERYC) and have content in line with SPC Social Media guidelines
* When posting about SPC announcements and documents link to the Facebook or website posting rather than try to force it into the 280-character limit which can lead to misinterpretation
* The SPC account should not be used to engage in arguments and/or heated debates or political discussions, including on local issues.
* Enquiries which require an SPC response should be referred to the Parish Clerk (the enquirer should be advised to raise the matter via email)

## Comments Posted

* If it is a comment it may not need a reply
* If an immediate answer is possible it will be given, then a message sent to the Parish Clerk
* If it relates to a sub- group the members of the group will be sent it to deal with, the resident so informed, and a copy sent to the Clerk. It will then become the responsibility of the sub-group.
* If sub- groups have Facebook accounts they can like the page & respond directly, thus protecting private accounts but continue to build a positive proactive council.