

**STONELEIGH AND ASHOW
JOINT PARISH COUNCIL**

POLICY STATEMENT - SOCIAL MEDIA

Aim:

The aim of this policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to staff and Parish Councillors in the use of online communications, collectively referred to as social media.

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

- Stoneleigh Village website
- Parish Council emails
- Facebook, MySpace and other social networking sites
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites
- YouTube and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- Blogs and discussion forums

Who does it apply to?

The principles of the policy apply to Parish Councillors and all Council Staff. It is also intended for guidance for others communicating with the Parish Council.

The policy sits alongside relevant existing policies, which need to be taken in to consideration.

Use of Social Media

The use of social media will not replace existing forms of communication. The Parish Council website:

www.stoneleighashowparishcouncil.btck.co.uk

plus the Parish Magazine 'Stoneleigh and Ashow News' will remain the main media for the purpose of communicating information about the Parish Council.

The village website and other forms of social media may be used to enhance communication. Therefore existing means of communication should continue with social media being an additional option.

The Policy

1. The Council will appoint a nominated member of staff or Councillor to act as moderator. They will be responsible for monitoring content ensuring it complies with the Social Media Policy.
2. The Council will appoint a nominated "Webmaster" to maintain and update postings to the Parish Council website. This site may be used to:
 - Post minutes and dates of meetings
 - Advertise events and activities
 - Vacancies
 - Convey new information or *Good News* stories
 - Provide contact details of Councillors
3. Emails will be used to distribute information of council business.

Guidance for Councillors using the Council's Media Presence

Individual Parish Councillors are responsible for what they post. Councillors are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published email address, which is used for council business. Councillors are strongly advised to have separate council and personal email addresses.

4. All social media sites in use should be checked and updated on a regular basis to ensure that security settings are in place.
5. When participating in any online communication:
 - Be responsible and respectful.
 - Always disclose your identity and affiliation to the Parish Council.
 - Never make false or misleading statements.
 - Parish Councillors should not present themselves in a way which might cause embarrassment. Information posted should comply with the Council's Code of Conduct.
 - Keep the tone of comments respectful and informative, never condescending.
 - Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks.
 - Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications.
 - Never use an individual's name unless you have written permission to do so.
 - Permission to publish photographs or videos on social media sites should be sought from the persons or organisations on the video or photograph before being uploaded.

6. Respect the privacy of other councillors and residents.
7. Do not post any information or conduct any online activity which may violate laws or regulations.
8. Residents and Councillors should note that not all communication requires an immediate response:
 - Some items may need to be discussed by the Parish Council and a response agreed by the members. The Parish Clerk will be responsible for all final published responses.
 - If a matter needs further consideration it may be raised at either the open forum or as a full agenda item to be considered by a quorum of Councillors.
 - Some communication from residents and other third parties may be required to be discussed at a Parish Council meeting. When this is necessary the item will be placed on the next available agenda. Any response will be included in the minutes of the meeting.
 - The nominated moderator shall check for errors or inappropriate content on any postings and liaise with the "Webmaster" to remove or correct.
 - Councillors or parishioners who have concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should report them to the Clerk of the Council. Misuse of such sites in a manner that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.
11. The policy will be reviewed annually.

This policy was adopted by the Parish Council on 9th May 2019 and will be reviewed annually.