Loose Parish Council

A Ragstone village

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Policy Statement

All sectors of society with access to the internet have the opportunity to use social media platforms and networking sites as a means of communication. Websites forums and communications devices such as Facebook etc are popular both on a personal and corporate level and have given many more people a medium through which to voice their opinions. The policy below outlines how Loose Parish Council (LPC) including all Committees and sub-committees will monitor and use social media as part of its overarching communications programme.*(N.B.Where Loose Parish Council or LPC is used in this document this relates to Full Council,Committees/groups,Sub-committees, Joint committes, or Joint Sub-Committees)*

The Loose Parish Council's main objectives when considering Social Media are:

- To ensure that Councillors/staff as designated (Agreed by the LPC) will act responsibly when accessing and posting on social media sites on behalf of the LPC.
- To monitor the activity of stakeholders, residents and other parties with an interest in LPC and its committees projects etc, and recognising the intentions of those contributors.
- To develop appropriate strategies to manage the resulting communications programmes, adhering to the social media protocol outlined below in order to deliver consistency in line with LPC image, professionalism and overarching communications strategy.

Overview
Social media is an important area of the communication strategy. It provides both Loose Parish Council and its stakeholders/residents with a further means of communication. It provides an opportunity to engage with those who cannot be reached via traditional publishing, broadcast or face-to-face methods and can be an effective means of reaching out to hard to reach, younger members of the community.
This method of communication is two-way.It is as much about listening as speaking. It requires transparency, authenticity and professionalism. Loose Parish Council appreciates that not all users of social media will share its point of view, nor its goals. These differing perspectives will be treated with respect.Loose Parish Council recognises that online discussions can become a story in their own right, and as a result will respond on this basis,

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ensuring that online activity complies with communication protocol and in line with LPC policy. This is especially important where an issue is contentious.

Loose Parish Council understands that less informed individuals and groups can use social media to voice questions, worries, concerns, instant reactions or to find information from alternative sources. Equally they may simply use these platforms as a means of discussing projects with the LPC.

These opinions, questions and discussions will be available for all to see and will be searchable via Google. Importantly, once posted they will remain accessible for future web surfers to find.

It can also:
- Provide a forum for debate, where those speaking can choose to either be identified or hide behind an anonymous façade.
- Be used to encourage feedback and interaction.
- Provide a less formal means of promoting key facts/events and engaging with individuals.

Loose Parish Council's Policy recognises and welcomes these uses of social media as part of the wider communications landscape.Loose Parish Council understands that by their nature, these diverse voices can be heard worldwide and that each individual or group's opinion is important.
Similarly, LPC's social media actions, whether proactive or reactive, will be visible worldwide for the foreseeable future and so are of equal importance.

Loose Parish Council's (LPC) Social Media routes and methods of use.
The social media landscape is constantly changing and evolving. LPC will undertake regular social media audits to ascertain which channels are most active.These channels will be included with the LPC communications strategy and, in terms of discrete projects, will be included within the project documentation. Where a project calls for a communication's strategy, these routes will also be highlighted and the protocol and strategies for managing communications provided.

Current Social Media routes and how LPC uses them are detailed below:

Facebook
"If Facebook was a country it would be the 4th most populated". However many users are grouped into smaller communities and so this is not a true reflection of its importance.

For Loose Parish Council the importance of this channel is in:
- Promoting activity,interest and events
- Seeking participation
- Providing feedback
- Monitoring opinion and landscape.

Loose Parish Council will develop a Facebook page to promote activities as agreed by the LPC or its committees/sub-committees. This will:

- Be managed by a member/staff as agreed by the LPC for the duration of the project who will take responsibility for ensuring that all information is correct and complies with the agreed protocol and subject matter.
- They will also ensure that all third party posts are responded to appropriately where required.
- A link to the Facebook page will be added to the LPC website.

Protocol for Social Media Engagement.
1. Where social media channels are to be used, this must be agreed by the Loose Parish Council at the outset.
2. A lead person as agreed by the LPC must be assigned responsibility for monitoring and reporting social media activity, drafting social media strategies and taking social media actions.
3. A strategy for social media must then be developed with should include the following items:
   - Social Media audit
   - Key messages
   - Key members/staff to sign off material
   - Required response time(to be determined by LPC)
   - How comments and responses are to be detailed.
   - The use of social media activity within reporting documents.

Making a Social Media response
When working online, Loose Parish Council will:
- Continuously monitor the social media environment
- Not become embroiled in lengthy dialogue/discussions
- Remain corporate and professional in tone at all times
- Provide simple directions to correct information/independent resources
- Provide information of events
- Consider when a response is needed and that a different channel may be more appropriate
- Recourse to key messages to ensure consistency
- Respond when required
- Be proactive and engaging through Facebook interface
- Develop online solutions that take into account mobile technology for viewing through I phones etc.