

Bere Ferrers Parish Council Social Media Policy

The Council have appointed the Clerk and two Councillors as being the authorised persons to place material on the Bere Ferrers social media sites, on behalf of the Council. The Clerk will decide on what should be published, in consultation with the Chair, as necessary.

The Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee (F & GP) will manage the implementation of this policy.

Official Bere Ferrers Parish Council Social Media sites:

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/BereFerrersParishCouncil>

Web Site: <http://www.bereferrersparishcouncil.org.uk>

The Council's Policy

The Council will use social media for the circulation of information about the Council, local services, common activities, promotion of cultural and leisure events, supporting local communities and cultivating a transparent policy facilitating a positive proactive relationship with the public.

Material published by the Council will not contain party political material and will not persuade the public to a particular political view, promote a particular councillor's proposals, decisions, or recommendations, or personalise issues. The Council will not respond directly to criticism or enter any debates.

Personal use of social media

Members of the Council are free to use social media for their own private purposes, but must not make entries, suggesting in any way that their views are those of the Council and they must not use their Councillor title. Bearing in mind that many people will know that they are a Councillor, it must be clear that they are expressing their own views.

Guidance for Councillors

What to bear in mind:

- When you engage online it is important to use your common sense. The things that can get you into hot water anywhere else are just the same things to avoid in social media.
- You are personally responsible for what you publish on social media. It is important that you think before you publish as words can't be unspoken. Even if you delete a hastily fired off blog or tweet, it will probably already have been read and will be indexed or duplicated in places beyond your reach.
- Remember that the law of defamation applies to social media in the same way as written or spoken communication and people can sue you for damages if they consider their reputation has been or may be harmed.

Councillors must not:

- Publish content using an affiliation with the Council for the promotion of personal financial interests, personal commercial ventures, or personal campaigns.
- Publish content in a way which appears as if the Council has endorsed it.
- Share sensitive or confidential information about the Council or its employees or councillors nor upload any photos or videos of colleagues without their express permission.
- Make any comment or post material so as to give a reasonable person the impression that you have brought your office as Councillor or the Council into disrepute.
- Present political or personal opinion as fact or as representative of the Council.
- Post or publish any material that is harassing or bullying. Harassment may include personal attacks on officers.
- Publish content in an abusive manner or contravenes the Council's Code of Conduct Policy.
- Disclose confidential information, including matters considered under Part 2 of any Council meeting. If you are in any doubt about this you should first speak to the Clerk, or Chair of Council.

Members' Code of Conduct

This applies to Councillor's online activity in the same way it would for other written or verbal communication. Councillors should comply with the general principles of the Code in what they publish and what they allow others to publish.

Application of this policy

All Employees/Councillors, whether Authorised Users or not, are required to adhere to this policy and guidance which forms part of the policy even when they are using social media for personal use.

Employees/Councillors should note that any breaches of the policy and guidance, for example, bullying of colleagues or social media activity causing serious damage to the organisation, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal.

If you discover defamatory, confidential, obscene, or otherwise unlawful material that you consider affects the Council or any of its employees (whether in a public forum or via direct message) you should draw it to the attention of the Chair of Council. You must take their advice and legal advice where necessary] before taking any action on the social media site in question.

Approving Committee	Finance & General Purposes
Last review	21 st September 2021. Minute No: 164
Next review	September 2022