



# HORSMONDEN PARISH COUNCIL

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

### **POLICY**

The Horsmonden Parish Council's medium for social media will be via its Website and Facebook accounts with the intention to:

Provide information and updates regarding activities and events within the Horsmonden parish and promote positive engagement from residents within the parish.

### **THE WEBSITE**

The Parish Council will maintain a website that provides information that residents may find useful. It is also one of the official channels of contact a resident can use to contact the Parish Council with their issues.

On the Website [www.horsmonden-pc.gov.uk](http://www.horsmonden-pc.gov.uk) can be found the following up-to-date information:

- Parish Council and individual Councilor's official contact details
- Minutes and agendas of Parish Council meetings
- Documents and policies regarding the Parish Council
- News of events and meetings
- Community links and amenities
- A contact form and directions to the parish office, and its opening times.

The Horsmonden Parish Council website includes all the details of its terms and conditions.

### **FACEBOOK**

The Parish Council will use this medium to allow for a wider public access to communications. The aim is for content to be productive, respectful, positive and consistent with the Council's goals. The core guidelines of the Parish Council and those communicating with the Council through this medium are to:

- Be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarity, threats or abuse will not be tolerated. Differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged,

but personal attacks on anyone, including Horsmonden Parish Council members and staff, will not be permitted

- Have responsibility to communicate truthfully, and this Policy encourages you to remember that you are publishing your comments when posting onto a Facebook page
- Share freely and be generous, but be aware of copyright laws. Be accurate and give credit where credit is due
- Stay on topic
- Not use the page for commercial purposes or to market products without the authority of the Council.

Remember, you are legally responsible for what you say and post on the website or any social media entry and that legal action could be taken against you for any libelous or damaging comments that you make.

The Parish Council will remove, at the earliest opportunity, all comments and content that do not adhere to the operational guidelines and also includes:

- Obscene, racist or discriminatory content
- Personal attacks, insults or threatening language
- Potentially libelous statements
- Plagiarized material and any material in violation of any laws and copyright
- Private and personal information published without consent
- Information or links unrelated to the content of the forum
- Commercial promotions or spam.

The Parish Council will not engage in or with (and actively discourages) posts or comments of a political or religious nature.

Although the Parish Council's webpage is an open forum, the Parish Council will not be able to reply to individual messages or comments received. Sending messages/posts via Facebook will not be considered as contacting the Parish Council for official purposes and it will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through Facebook. The Parish Council will, however, endeavor to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are considered and/or passed to the relevant people through ad hoc monitoring where possible, carried out by a councillor/councillors. In monitoring Facebook and any other social media, councillors will not respond to or post messages which purport to be from the Council as a body.

To contact the Parish Council for official purposes please use the website [www.horsmonden-pc.gov.uk](http://www.horsmonden-pc.gov.uk) or the email address: [clerk@horsmonden-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@horsmonden-pc.gov.uk)

By choosing to comment and/or utilise Horsmonden Parish Council's Facebook page users are deemed to agree to this Policy in addition to the standing terms relating to your registration with, and use of, that social media platform.

## **LEGAL ADMISSIONS**

Horsmonden Parish Council is not responsible for the accuracy of content posted by any external contributor in any forum. Opinions expressed in comments do not necessarily represent those of Horsmonden Parish Council.

All materials, once posted, become the property of Horsmonden Parish Council and it reserves the right to reproduce, distribute, publish and display or edit them. Derivative work can also be created from such postings or content and used for any purpose and in any form or media the Parish Councils deems fit. This excludes any posts that contravene the policy principles set out above. All such posts will be removed by Horsmonden Parish Council at the earliest opportunity.

Horsmonden Parish Council is not responsible, liable for and do not endorse the privacy practices of Facebook, or any linked website. The use of Facebook and any linked website is at the user's own risk.

Horsmonden Parish Council assumes no responsibility or liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred as a result of any use or reliance upon the information and material contained within or downloaded from the websites.

Horsmonden Parish Council accepts no responsibility for the availability of Facebook.

The presence of any advertisement on Facebook is not an endorsement of the authenticity or quality of the goods, services or website and Horsmonden Parish Council will not be held responsible for any claims arising in that respect.

## **HORSMONDEN PARISH COUNCIL CODE OF PRACTICE**

When using social media Parish Councillors and officers must be mindful of anything they post in a Parish Council capacity and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative since Councillors can have a blurred identity. They may have social media accounts of their own where they comment both as an individual and as a Councillor and they must ensure, in these cases, that they are clear when they are posting in a private capacity or as a Councillor. They must be aware that by holding a position in the Council this does not provide them with immunity against actual defamation.

Parish Councilors' views posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the Parish Council at full Council or committee meetings may constitute pre-disclosure, pre-determination or bias, and may require the individual to declare an interest at Council meetings.

Parish Council members must not:

- Hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms
- Present personal or political opinions as that of the Parish Council
- Present themselves in a way that may cause embarrassment to the Parish Council

- Post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the Parish Council
- Commit the Parish Council to any work, campaign or process that is not a resolution of the full Parish Council
- Post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks
- Engage in personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications
- Use an individual's name unless given written consent to do so
- Publish any personal details of any Parish Councillor or officer without their written consent
- Publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
- Post any information that infringes copyright law
- Post any information that may be deemed to be libelous
- Post any information that constitutes bullying or harassment
- Bring the Parish Council into disrepute, including content posted in a personal capacity
- Post offensive language relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief
- Conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or constitutes a criminal offence
- Publish untrue statements about a person which is damaging to their reputation.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **COUNCILLORS**

Individual Councillors must adhere to this Policy and other Parish Council policies in the conduct of their business. They are at liberty to set up their own accounts but should ensure that they comply with this Policy and ensure that a personal view disclaimer is used when responding as an individual. Any Councillor who considers that any communication requires to be discussed by the Parish Council should do so under the rules of the Parish Council's Standing Orders.

### **CLERK**

The Clerk is the designated council owner of Horsmonden Parish Council's Facebook page. Any other staff member or Councillor officially appointed by the Council may assist the Clerk to disseminate information. However, all must ensure they follow this Policy. No account details may be changed without the permission of the Clerk.

The Clerk will present to the next available Parish Council meeting any communications considered to require discussion prior to an official response being made by the Parish Council to ensure that the response is minuted. The poster of the comment will be invited to the meeting to raise or answer questions relating to the post if it is considered necessary. The Clerk and Chair will be responsible for all final published responses.

## **OTHER ADMINISTRATORS**

The Parish Council may appoint other administrators, e.g. the Assistant Clerk, to monitor the Facebook page. They will report directly to the Clerk on all issues. They will bring to the attention of the Clerk any posts that they consider requires a response from the Parish Council, or is of significance in its nature that the Parish Council should be made aware of its content. The administrator will remove all posts that contravene this Policy at the earliest opportunity and will provide a report as to the nature of the infringements to the Clerk. The Clerk will provide information to the administrator that the Parish Council wishes to publish on its Facebook page.

The administrator will not amend any posts, issue their own posts or respond to posts using the Parish Council's account, without first confirming with the Clerk.