

Shevington Parish Council

Guidelines for Best Practice in the Use of Social Media

These Guidelines have been put together to support Councillors, Co-opted members, Staff and Volunteers in appropriate use of social media.

Benefits and Risks of Social Media

There are clearly many benefits to social media. However, there are also potential risks. These guidelines are intended to protect all stakeholders from these risks.

Personal Use of Social Media

All councillors should make a clear distinction between pronouncements made in a private capacity and those made as part of their public role.

Otherwise it may be assumed that you are acting in an official capacity and speaking on behalf of the Council.

Councillors can be legally liable for any defamatory material they may post on line.

Official Use of Social Media

Social Media can be a beneficial and cost-effective way of reaching out to residents to engage, consult and communicate. HOWEVER, when using social media in an official capacity members must

1. stay within the legal framework and be aware that libel, defamation, copyright and data protection laws apply.
2. be sure that content associated with you will not bring your Office or the Council into disrepute.
 1. respect your audience. The Council, its officers, service users, partners and customers reflect a diverse set of views, values and points of view. It is important, therefore, to avoid comments which may be considered offensive.
 2. do not disclose any confidential information to an outside body.
 3. refrain from speculating on matters which have not yet been officially announced.

Conclusion

Freedom of speech is a fundamental human right, but must be used by all stakeholders responsibly.

Councillors must remember that material posted online in a personal capacity cannot be isolated from their public life. Conduct online should not bring the Councillor or the Council into disrepute.

The Council's aim is to provide the best possible service for residents of the Parish of Shevington. It promotes high standards of conduct from Members and Co-opted committee members. It has adopted the Code of Conduct in accordance with its obligations under section 27(2) of the Localism Act 2011.

Do's and Don't's

Councillors should

- familiarise themselves with site policies, instructions, security and privacy settings.
- always make it clear whether they are acting in a public or in a private capacity.
- demonstrate high ethical standards.
- conduct business in a way which benefits our community
- remember their professional obligations and adhere to the Code of Conduct.
- use common sense.

Councillors should not:

- engage in online activities which may bring their office into disrepute.
- disclose confidential information.
- use the Internet to attack or abuse others.
- make offensive or derogatory comments about any other person.
- breach in any way the Members Code of Conduct.

Councillors represent the community. The community expects the highest possible standard of public and private behaviour.

Scope

Some of these guidelines are specifically relevant to elected Councillors. Others are equally applicable to all who have a connection to the Parish Council.

These guidelines are drawn from policies provided by Wigan Metro Authority and NALC website.

Jean Fletcher and Ira Whiteley