



Fretherne with Saul Parish Council Publicity and Media Policy

Adopted at the meeting of the Full Council on 28th June 2023

Scope of Policy:

The Press and Media Policy includes:

- a) Social Media Platforms and Fretherne with Saul Parish Council's website
- b) Press, The Media and Official Statement Releases
- c) Councillors direct communication with Press
- d) Freedom of Information Requests

Foreword:

Fretherne with Saul Parish Council recognises that a relationship with the press can assist communication with parishioners and welcomes media enquiries. The press and public are permitted to attend all meetings of the Council and its Committees unless excluded under the Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960.

Council reserves the right to exclude public and press from Working Group meetings and any other meeting which is not official council meetings.

Social Media Platforms

This covers all forms of social media including social networking sites.

Aspects of the Members' Code of Conduct apply to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. Online content should be objective, balanced, informative, and accurate.

- All announcements on social media in the name of the Parish Council should be made through the Parish Office. Announcements of a sensitive nature on social media will be posted with comments switched off, these should only be shared with the same restriction in place.
- Any questions that arise from external posts must be referred to the Parish Council Office on fwsparishclerk@gmail.com who will reply on behalf of the Parish Council. Where necessary replies will be subject to the consideration of the Full Council.
- Individual councillors may write or post on social media in their own name, as may any other citizen. They should make it clear that they are doing so in this capacity, by omitting their title as councillor and stating that they are speaking in a personal capacity.
- Individual councillors writing or posting on social media are personally responsible for what they say, and subject, like all other citizens, to the laws of defamation. Defamation is the act of making a statement about a person or a company that is considered to harm reputation. If the defamatory statement is written (in print or online) it is known as libel. Defamatory statements are most likely to constitute a breach of the adopted Code of Conduct.
- Councillors should inform the Parish Clerk via email of any abusive written or social media postings, including email communications. The Parish Clerk will take action on them in consultation with Chair and/or Vice-Chair as appropriate

- Councillors are advised not to open any emails if they suspect their contents may be inappropriate or abusive, but to forward them to the Parish Clerk, who will take appropriate action, including involvement of the Police if necessary.
- Both Councillors and the Clerk must ensure that any comment or post on social media regarding an active or forthcoming planning application cannot be construed as bias or pre-determination.
- Any questions or content suggestions may be raised with the Clerk, issues shall then be taken to a Council meeting.

The Fretherne with Saul Parish Council Website

- The Clerk is responsible for the day-to-day management of the website with the support of the external web development company (Town & Parish Council Websites).
- The Clerk will manage content and ensure that the information provided is always both legally compliant and transparent.
- Should Councillors wish to include content on the website they should discuss this with the Clerk who can assist.

Press, the Media and Official Releases on behalf of Fretherne with Saul Parish Council

- The Clerk will act as Councils Press Officer.
- All announcements in print in the name of the Parish Council should be made through the Parish Office.
- Official Press releases and statements will be prepared and released by the Clerk in consultation with the Chairman or other Councillors as required.
- Members who identify a media opportunity shall discuss this with the Clerk in advance of any action being taken. The Clerk in turn will discuss with the appropriate Councillors and review the best way to progress.
- When speaking with the media, both the Clerk and Councillors must consider the reputation of Council.
- In instances where the Clerk is approached to make comment by the press, they should remain neutral and only provide factual information. If the Clerk feels it is not in the best interest of Council to make comment, they reserve the right to refuse comment.
- If the Clerk is unavailable, they may delegate this duty to another member of staff or an appropriate Councillor.
- If the Clerk feels another member is better equipped to answer any questions presented by the press, they may delegate responses to the media.

Councillors' direct communication with the press.

- Individual Councillors may make their own statements relating to local issues. This policy is not designed to prevent any expression of personal opinion. However, it must be made clear it is personal opinion and not that of Council unless agreed by Council in advance or discussed in advance with the Clerk.

Freedom of Information Requests

All requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act are to be referred to the Parish Clerk, who, in routine cases will arrange for the information request to be satisfied in accordance with the legislation.

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Last Review:

Next Review: June 2024