

# **GRAVENEY with GOODNESTONE PARISH COUNCIL**

## **MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

**Adopted July 2021**

**Review July 2023**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. Graveney with Goodnestone Parish Council strives to be open and accessible to the media at all times.
2. The council uses external communication with the media for a number of purposes:
  - To broaden and strengthen local democracy through a well-informed public
  - To raise awareness of the council's policies, services and functions
  - To publicise meetings and decisions of the council and other decision making committees
  - To promote the council's role as a community leader
  - To publicise the council's role in partnership initiative with other bodies
  - To enable local people to have an effective, well-informed dialogue with the council about services and policies and the needs of individuals and communities
  - In an emergency, to highlight public safety messages and keep people informed
3. The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities of the clerk and councillors in dealing with the media.
4. It is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules and regulations. Rather, the intention is to establish a framework for achieving an effective working relationship with the media.
5. The 'media' includes the press, radio and television.
6. The clerk and councillors should always have due regard for the reputation of the council in all their dealings with the media, and should ensure they abide by the Code of Conduct at all times.
7. Confidential matters should not be discussed in any circumstance.

### **MEETINGS**

8. Agendas and minutes of meetings should be made available to the media on request.
9. Attendance of the media at meetings is welcomed and facilities will be provided for taking reports if requested.
10. The press are entitled to report on the proceedings of a meeting, including filming, photographing, recording or making written commentary.

### **COMMUNICATION WITH THE MEDIA**

11. Contact with the media, either instigated or as a response, should be via the clerk in the first instance, with recourse to the Chair if necessary.
12. Enquiries from the media will be dealt with in an efficient and timely manner.

13. Wherever possible, information given to the media should be in writing, so as not to leave interpretation open to misunderstanding and misreporting.

14. Press releases will be prepared and issued by the clerk in consultation with the Chair.

15. The council's publicity will be objective and balanced and will be designed not to affect public support for any particular political party.

16. If approached by the media, councillors should only comment if they are authorised to do so and they are confident about the issue raised and the council's policy or response to a particular activity, service or issue. It is important that quotes made on behalf of the council are factual and standards and ethics are maintained. The clerk should be informed of the approach.

17. If a councillor has not been authorised by the council to speak to the media, or is not confident on a particular issue, they may use the title of councillor but should make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as such.

18. It is the responsibility of the councillor concerned to redress any comments misconstrued as representing the views of the council.

### **URGENT SITUATIONS**

19. In urgent situations where it is not possible to refer the media to the clerk or the Chair, councillors may represent the council but should ensure their statement reflects the council's position and opinion, and should have particular regard to points 6 and 7 above.

### **OTHER PUBLICITY**

20. The clerk will update notice boards and maintain the council's website, liaising with the Chair as appropriate to provide a useful means of informing residents of the council's services and activities.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

21. The aim of the Social Media Policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to staff and Parish Councillors in the use of online communications, collectively referred to as social media. Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet. The policy covers the following:

- Graveney with Goodnestone Parish Council Website
- Graveney with Goodnestone Parish Council Facebook page

22. The principles of the Policy apply to Parish Councillors and Council Staff. It is also intended for guidance for others communicating with the Parish Council. The policy sits alongside relevant existing policies which need to be taken into consideration.

23. The use of social media will not replace existing forms of communication. The website and other forms of social media will be used to enhance communication. Existing means of communication should continue with social media being an additional option.

24. The Parish Clerk and an appointed Cllr, or two Cllrs will be appointed as moderators. They will be responsible for posting and monitoring of the content ensuring it complies with the Social Media Policy. The moderators will have authority to remove any posts made by third parties from social media pages which are deemed to be of a defamatory, libellous nature. Such posts may also be reported to the Hosts (i.e. Facebook).

25. The Council's Clerk will be the appointed "Webmaster" to maintain and update the Parish Council Website.

The social media may be used to:

- Post minutes and dates of meetings
- Advertise events and activities
- Good news stories linked website or press page
- Vacancies
- Retweeting or 'share' information from partners i.e. Police, Local Businesses
- Announcing new information
- Post or share information from other Parish related community groups/clubs/associations
- Refer resident queries to the clerk and other cllrs

Facebook will be used to support the website information above.

26. Individual parish councillors are responsible for what they post. Councillors are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published email address which is used for council business. Councillors are strongly advised to have separate council and personal email addresses and adhere to the Members' Code of Conduct.

27. All social media sites in use should be checked and updated on a regular basis and ensure that the security settings are in place.

28. When participating in any online communication:

- a. Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent.
- b. Always disclose your identity and affiliation to the Parish Council. Never make false or misleading statements.
- c. Parish Councillors should not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment. All Parish Councillors need to be mindful of the information they post on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the council or bring the council into disrepute or is contrary to the Council's code of Conduct or any other Policies
- d. Keep the tone of your comments respectful and informative, never condescending or 'loud'. Use sentence case format, not capital letter, or write in red to emphasis points.
- e. Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks. Language that may be deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age or religion or belief should not be published on any social media site.
- f. Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications.
- g. Never use an individual's name unless you have written permission to do so.
- h. Permission to publish photographs or videos on social media sites should be sought from the person or organisations in the video or photograph before being uploaded.
- i. Respect the privacy of other councillors and residents.
- j. Do not post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or Regulations.

29. Residents and Councillors should note that not all communication requires a response:

a. There will not be immediate responses to communications as they may be discussed by the Parish Council and all responses will be agreed by the Parish Council.

b. The moderators will be responsible for all final published responses.

c. If a matter needs further consideration it may be raised as a full agenda item for consideration by a quorum of Councillors. The poster shall be informed via the page or direct message that this is the case.

d. If the moderator feels unable to answer a post for example of a contentious nature this shall be referred to the Parish Clerk. The poster will be informed by way of response to this fact and also be invited to correspond with the Parish Clerk directly.

e. Some communication from residents and other third parties may be required to be discussed at a Parish Council meeting. When this is necessary the item will be placed on the next available agenda. Any response will then be included in the minutes of the meeting.

30. The nominated moderators shall remove any negative posts which may contain personal and inflammatory remarks, libellous or defamatory information without further comment or notification.

31. Councillors or parishioners who have any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should report them to the Parish Clerk. Misuse of such sites in a manner that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.

32. Any links placed on the website/Facebook are for ease of finding information - they are not an endorsement of any of their services