



## Media Policy

### 1. Introduction:

- 1.1 Desford Parish Council (“the Council”) is committed to the provision of accurate information about its governance, decisions and activities. Where this information is not available via the Council’s website, please contact the Clerk
- 1.2 The Council shall, where possible, co-operate with those whose work involves gathering material for publication in any form, including use of the internet (“the media”)
- 1.3 This policy explains how the Council may work with the media to meet the above objectives in accordance with the legal requirements and restrictions that apply

### 2. Who does it apply to?

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

### 3. Legal requirements and restrictions:

- 3.1 This policy is subject to the Council’s obligations which are set out in appropriate government legislation and the Council’s Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The Council’s Standing Orders and Financial Regulations are available via the Council’s website or from the Clerk
- 3.2 The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information the disclosure of which is prohibited by law. The Council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the Council’s Standing Orders, under contract or by common law. Councillors are subject to additional restrictions about the disclosure of confidential information which arise from the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council, a copy of which is available via the Council’s website or from the Clerk

### 4. Meetings:

- 4.1 Meetings of the Council and its committees are open to the public unless the meeting resolves to exclude them because their presence at the meeting is prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business or other special reason(s) stated in the resolution. In accordance with the Council’s Standing Orders, persons may be required to leave a meeting of the Council and its committees, if their disorderly behaviour obstructs the business of the meeting

- 4.2 Where a meeting of the Council and its committees includes an opportunity for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the Council's Standing Orders
- 4.3 The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a meeting of the Council and its committees (which includes eg. using a mobile phone or tablet, recording for a TV/radio broadcast, providing commentary on blogs, web forums or social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) which enable a person not at the meeting to see, hear or be given commentary about the meeting is permitted unless (i) the meeting has resolved to hold all or part of the meeting without the public present or (ii) such activities disrupt the proceedings or (iii) paragraphs 4.4 and 4.5 below apply
- 4.4 The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a child or vulnerable adult at a Council or committee meeting is not permitted, unless an adult responsible for them has given permission
- 4.5 Oral reporting or commentary about a Council or committee meeting by a person who is present at the meeting is not permitted during the course of the meeting
- 4.6 The Council shall, as far as is practicable, provide reasonable facilities for anyone taking a report of a Council or committee meeting and for telephoning their report at their own expense

## **5. Other communication with the media:**

- 5.1 This policy does not seek to regulate councillors in their private capacity
- 5.2 The Council's communications with the media seek to represent the corporate position and views of the Council. If the views of councillors are different from the Council's corporate position and views, they must make this clear
- 5.3 The Council may ask the Clerk to contact the media if the Council wants to provide information, a statement or other material about the Council

## **6. Social Media:**

- 6.1 The aim of this section of the policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to staff and Parish Councillors in the use of social media
- 6.2 Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet. The policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites.
- 6.3 Any form of social media which the Council may choose to use will be an enhancement, not a replacement of existing forms of communication. The Council will continue to publish notices on the Council's notice boards for the purpose of communicating information about the Council to those who do not have access to computers/tablets, smart phones etc
- 6.4 The Council will appoint a moderator of its facebook page, who may be a councillor. They will be responsible for posting and monitoring of the content, ensuring it complies with the Media Policy. The moderator will have authority to remove any posts from the social media pages which are deemed to be of a defamatory or otherwise inappropriate nature. Such posts may also be reported to the hosts (ie. Facebook)
- 6.5 The Council has appointed the Clerk to manage, maintain and update the Council website

**6.6** Social media may be used to:

- 6.6.1** Post dates of meetings and give a link to the appropriate agenda
- 6.6.2** Advertise events and activities
- 6.6.3** Post news stories linked to a website or press page
- 6.6.4** Advertise vacancies
- 6.6.5** Announce new information

**6.7** Emails may be used to distribute information of council business

**6.8** Individual Parish Councillors are responsible for what they post. Councillors are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published e mail address which is used for council business. Councillors are strongly advised to have separate council and personal e mail addresses and adhere to the Code of Conduct

**6.9** All social media sites should be checked by the responsible person and updated on a regular basis and checks made to ensure that the security settings are in place

**6.10** When participating in any Parish Council related communication:

**6.10.1** Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent

**6.10.2** Always disclose your identity and affiliation to the Parish Council

**6.10.3** Never make false or misleading statements

**6.10.4** Parish Councillors should not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment

**6.10.5** All Parish Councillors need to be mindful of the information they post on sites. They must make it clear that it is their personal opinion and not the view of the Council

**6.10.6** They must not publish anything which could bring the Council into disrepute or is contrary to the Council's Code of Conduct or any other policies

**6.10.7** Keep the tone of your comments respectful and informative at all times

**6.10.8** Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks

**6.10.9** Language that may be deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief should not be published on any social media site.

**6.10.10** Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications

**6.10.11** Never use an individual's name unless you have written permission to do so

**6.10.12** Respect the privacy of other councillors and residents

**6.10.13** Do not post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations

**6.11** Parishioners and Councillors should note that not all communication requires a response. There may not be an immediate answer/comment to communications (but an acknowledgment will be sent) as the communication may be discussed by the Council and responses will be agreed by the Council where necessary.

- 6.11.1** Councillors or parishioners who have any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should report them to the Clerk or moderator
- 6.12** Misuse of such sites in a manner that is contrary to this, and other policies may result in action being taken

*Approved by Desford Parish Council at its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023*