Beaudesert & Henley-in-Arden Joint Parish Council

Social Media Policy

Adopted	30.07.24
Review Date Policy reviewed every year or upon legislative change	01.12.25
Version	2.0

1. Purpose

Beaudesert & Henley-in-Arden Parish Council (JPC) recognises that social media platforms such as Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram are widely used and offer valuable opportunities for community engagement. This policy provides guidance for councillors, staff, and authorised users on the responsible use of social media in relation to council business.

2. Objectives

The JPC uses social media to:

- Inform residents and the wider community about council activities, decisions, and events
- Share important updates and emergency information
- Promote local initiatives and consultations

- Supplement the council's website and noticeboards
- Engage with residents using mobile and digital platforms

3. Acceptable Use of IT resources and email

The JPC's IT resources and gov.uk email addresses should only be used for official council-related activities and tasks. Councillors and clerks should not use their gov.uk email addresses to express personal views that may be misconstrued as official parish council positions. All users must adhere to ethical standards, respect copyright and intellectual property rights, and avoid accessing inappropriate or offensive content. All IT resources must be used responsibly and solely for council-related business. Users must comply with relevant legislation, including the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR and refrain from using council systems for personal gain or political campaigning.

4. Use of Official Accounts

The JPC operates official accounts on platforms including Facebook and Instagram as a communication and broadcast tools. Acceptable content includes:

- Council news and announcements
- Event listings and key dates
- Emergency alerts and public service information
- Consultation materials and polls
- Links to verified partner organisations
- Short, moderated discussions on relevant topics

5. Social Media Posts

To ensure accuracy, professionalism, and compliance with statutory duties:

- All posts on or from the JPC's official accounts, including imagery, captions, hashtags and video content, must be non-personal and ensure that all is factual, balanced, free from personal opinion, and reflects the corporate voice of the council.
- Posts must not reference private discussions with third parties (e.g., District or County Councillors) unless formally agreed and documented.

- Any post that misrepresents the council, breaches confidentiality, or exposes individuals to reputational risk will be reviewed and may be removed.

6. Account Management

Official accounts may only be created with formal approval from the JPC.

- Access is restricted to authorised users, with credentials securely managed.
- The Clerk and appointed members monitor activity and report any concerns.
- All content must comply with the council's Data Protection and Confidentiality Policies.
- Platform-specific features (e.g. stories, reels, hashtags, live broadcasts) must be used cautiously and only with prior approval.

7. Moderation Policy

The JPC Facebook page is reactively moderated. The council reserves the right to remove comments that:

- Contain abusive, obscene, or offensive language
- Are irrelevant, spam-like, or disruptive
- Breach confidentiality or target individuals
- Promote products or services unrelated to council business
- Comments on platforms with limited moderation tools (e.g. Instagram) may be disabled or restricted to protect council integrity

Persistent breaches may result in users being blocked.

8. Use of Photos and Video

Only the Clerk and appointed members may upload imagery or video content. This includes posts, stories, reels, and livestreams. All media must comply with copyright law and safeguarding protocols. Consent must be obtained for identifiable individuals, especially children or vulnerable persons.

9. Personal Accounts

Councillors and staff may operate personal social media accounts but must:

- Clearly distinguish personal views from council positions
- Avoid disclosing confidential information
- Refrain from derogatory, libellous, or speculative comments
- Maintain a professional tone at all times

10. Purdah

During the six-week pre-election period, the council will avoid any content that could be perceived as supporting a political party or candidate. Service updates may continue, but political comments will be moderated or removed.

11. Direct Messages

The Clerk and appointed members will respond to appropriate queries via social media. Formal matters must be directed to the Clerk via email: **clerk@henley-in-arden-pc.gov.uk**

12. Forums and Blogs

The JPC may monitor external platforms for feedback and factual corrections but will avoid engaging in contentious debates. Abusive or misleading references to the JPC will be addressed appropriately.