

On 1 Aug 2023, at 12:00, Linda Roberts <linda.roberts@melksham-tc.gov.uk> wrote:

Hello Both

Just letting you know that I have deleted these posts (attached) which are on the town council's Facebook page, (live streaming of the Finance Meeting). Facebook is not the platform for councillors to be discussing council business. It also projects a poor image of the council.

Comments on Facebook should really be for the public and any posts should be made by officers.

Linda

On 2 Aug 2023, at 07:58, Graham Ellis <graham.ellis@melksham-tc.gov.uk> wrote:

Dear Linda,

Following our chat last night, please find below the correspondence relating to the "Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy" proposal which I first became aware of in the agenda pack published on 10th July 2023 for us to "Review and Adopt" on 17th July 2023. You will note that the policy didn't have an author / version / date of writing on it (though it did presume to say "Adopted 17th July") and in answer to my enquiry, our committee clerk declares his authorship, with amendment by yourself. It appears to have been based prior to amendment on a mature SLCC template that many other councils use.

There are elements of the proposed amended policy that cause me serious concern. A lot of good stuff, but I wonder why some things are included and some things are left out; it's my view that if we were to adopt it as it stands, and implement it in full as written, we would be severely limiting our officers and indeed our councillors in what they could say, while at the same time leaving some holes which could be abused should people be minded to do so.

Linda, your name (not just role) is reported to have been the one who signed this off - not just as a "cut and paste" formality on the base of an agenda. It had (and still has) me concerned that it was to come to council with just 7 days notice, deep within an agenda and without the originators present to at least explain the logic of some of the wording. Little point even in my writing up to ask because neither originator was available in the run up. I came to council on 17th July prepared to, if necessary, raise my major concerns at what seemed to be a key policy that would restrict the ability of staff and councillor to inform. I was also somewhat disappointed that with all the time constraints on yourself that we hear about you apparently had found the time resource to work on this restricting policy.

Bearing that in mind, and also (perhaps you have forgotten, but I have not) my being called up to what felt like the headmistress's office in the early days of this council, being sent upstairs and kept waiting, and then being alerted to your concerns at aspects of my use of the internet, you will appreciate my

somewhat concern (but it was understood) with your decision to delete my supportive comment, and much stronger concern (alarm!) at your statement that - in your words - "Facebook is not the platform for councillors to be discussing council business."

I am relieved (and thank you) for clarifying that you meant that we should not be using public pages for internal communications - yes, agreed. Can we, please, find a way to move forward with a set of guidelines that work for us all - helping us promote all the good work the town council does, and explain difficult issues as they arise, let councillors share views and the public express theirs, and avoid us having to spend lots of time and energy "moderating" content while helping bring "sore" topics to a logical conclusion rather than festering.

A number of councillors have an IT background - this was highlighted at Finance on Monday when we considered the Rialtis report - perhaps a possible way forward is to let some of the skills they have inform and suggest the social media policy, and indeed help you with the finance software, social media quality concerns, etc.? That's wider than between just the three of us in this email exchange so far; you are very welcome to share it and that would be an excellent idea to get wide views and a broadly informed outcome.

Graham

Melksham Town Council, South Ward

Blog at <http://grahamellis.uk/perm.html>

Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Graham4Melksham/>

I only visit other social media occasionally.

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