

# Amesbury Town Council

## Guidelines For Creating Publicly Accessible Online Content

These guidelines should be used when posting publicly available content online, including on the Town Council website and it's social media channels. The purpose of this checklist is to ensure that the Council posts consistent, relevant and well formatted content.

### Scope

1. These guidelines may be updated as new channels are introduced, but currently the scope of these guidelines apply to content created, shared or posted on the following approved online channels;
  - a. The Bowman Centre & Centenary Pavilion Facebook page (Used solely for promoting activities and groups as well as Town Council facilities)
  - b. Amesbury Town Council Facebook page (main Town Council social media profile)
  - c. Amesbury Town Council Website (authoritative source for all town council content)

### All Content

2. All publicly available online content created or posted by the Town Council should be peer reviewed for policy compliance and quality prior to publication. Peer review is good practice and helps ensure that any errors are picked up prior to publication.
3. All press releases and council created content, such as news items, should be published via the town councils website. Social media should be used to link to website content and include a short description explaining what the full article contains.

### Website Content

4. All website articles should be written in the 3rd person in the style of news articles. Actual statements from individuals should be quoted (in quotation marks) and credited.
5. Reason: To ensure the council is not seen to be biased.
6. Always use a short headline that describes what the post is about. The headline of an article should be catchy and to the point. You should punctuate your title using Associated Press style guidelines unless your publication specifies something else. Other members of the publication staff frequently write the headlines, but this will help focus your thoughts and maybe save those other staffers some time. Examples;
  - a. "Alzheimer support group finds new home"
  - b. "Council invests in Bowman Centre improvements"
  - c. "Man-shed debate tonight in Bowman Centre"
  - d. "Panel chooses Toilet contract winner"
  - e. "Pastor receives community award"

## **Social Media (Facebook)**

7. Always provide context 'post' text when creating Facebook posts. Avoid posting links without providing any context text in the post description.
8. Social media posts, which should always follow a Town Council website post, will be shared to the Town Councils own social media profile main newsfeed in the first instance. This post can then be shared, using the Town Councils profile, to other relevant groups and pages. Relevant groups and pages may include, but not be limited to;
  - a. Spotted in Amesbury
  - b. Archers Gate & Kings Gate Community Page
  - c. Amesbury Events
  - d. VisitAmesbury
9. When posting to relevant groups and pages, the poster should always ensure that the post content complies with that groups own rules.
10. Where possible, when posting to groups, post as the Town Council profile, sharing an original post on the councils own newsfeed to a group (rather than copy/pasting content and creating a new post). This helps ensure that algorithms on the social media sites do not score posts as being duplicates. Staff or councillors should avoid posting content on behalf of the council using personal profiles. Where the council is unable to post under it's own profile (such as Facebook groups that do not allow membership or posts by other Pages) then the original council post should be shared.  
*Reason: To ensure that the council maintains a consistent approach to content posting and to differentiate between personal and official content. Also to prevent enquiries, criticism or comments being directed directly at Town Council staff.*

## **Use Of Images**

11. When writing website articles, ensure at least 1 relevant image is included as part of the article, and that the image is captioned. Where possible this should be an image, rather than a poster or pictogram.
12. *Reason: This ensures that the layout of the town councils Facebook pages remains consistent and aids accessibility.*
13. Content should not be posted that is contained within an image, such as a poster, advert or digital leaflet. Where content such as this is used, all information in those images should be described clearly within the article.  
*Reason: Screen readers and accessibility tools are unable to 'read' content embedded within images.*

## **Crediting Content**

14. All images should be used permission and credited to their respective copyright owners or photographers. Where an image allows a caption then the credit should be

placed in the caption, otherwise the image credit should be placed at the end of the full article on the Town Councils website (e.g. Image Credit; Cllr Joe Bloggs).

15. Every website article should also have an author credited. For general posts written by Town Council staff, where the staff member does not want their name published, then this should be 'Town Clerk' or 'Staff Article'. Where a staff members name is used then this should be accompanied by a job title & organisation name (e.g. Amenities Officer, Amesbury Town Council). External content can be credited back via a 'Source:' credit – (e.g. Source: Wiltshire Council). Where crediting sources try to include an external link to the source.

### **Relevance & External Organisations**

16. Items on the Town Council Facebook page should remain relevant to the Councils activities, or activities which it is supporting, such as community events.

17. Consideration should be given to the audience of the town councils own page and its purpose, when sharing external content - such as that of unitary authorities and organisations such as the police and fire service. Posts by external organisations may be 'shared' onto the councils own social media profile, if they are relevant, but should not then be shared further onto other groups or pages.

*Reason: Promotion of third parties social media posts is the responsibility of the original content creator and could otherwise result in duplication. Many residents will already follow these third party pages if they feel the information is relevant to them. Repeated content posted on town council social media pages that isn't relevant to the town councils activities may result in persons 'unfollowing' the page.*

18. Where content mentions external organisations or entities, then these should be tagged or linked back to that companies own profiles. For example, a website article thanking a company for sponsorship – the companies name should be a hyperlink (or tag in the case of social media) back to that companies website.

*Reason: Good practice*

19. All website links to external organisations should be set to open in a new window.

*Reason: Good practice*

20. Relevant and important 3rd party information, such as seasonal bin collection times, may also be posted on the Town Councils Facebook page. Where possible these posts should be 'Shared' via their original source (such as the Wiltshire Council Facebook page) to help residents differentiate the Town councils own areas of responsibility and those posts that are on behalf of other parties.

*Reason: The town council posting changes to bin collection times, without making clear it's source, may lead to criticism or enquiries directed at the town council for an area not within its responsibilities.*