



COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Highfield Park Office
Hill End Lane
St Albans
Hertfordshire AL4 0RA
Tel: 01727 825314

Email: clerk@colneyheathparishcouncil.gov.uk

Colney Heath Village Office
83 High Street
Colney Heath
Hertfordshire AL4 0NS

10th August 2020

RE: Freedom of Information Act 2000 Colney Heath Parish Council Social Media Commenting

The commenting on all Facebook posts was switched off at the Clerk's instruction in October 2019. This decision was taken after abusive, upsetting and threatening personal comments aimed at officers and councillors. As an employer there is a duty of care to Parish Council employees to protect their mental health and wellbeing. The administration of social media pages does not appear in the job description of any Parish Council employee.

The Facebook and Twitter pages were set up to engage with the community but often turned exceptionally personal, the comments in a similar vein as were reported over the weekend 8/9 August 2020 these were reported. It should be noted that social media is not a recognised or legal method to formally contact the Parish Council but was set up by the current Parish Clerk via Twitter and Facebook to try and offer other forms of engagement.

Sadly due to misinformation, historical precedence and a previous unqualified Clerk there remains levels of anger and bitterness particularly from the Colney Heath Ward at some of the perceived 'new' legally required decisions made by the Council and these have proved a real challenge for both residents and councillors alike. All feedback is welcome be it positive or negative as this can help the Council improve its current or future services.

The Parish Council social media platforms now serve as information pages and the posts are often shared with the Facebook pages of 'Colney Heath Village', 'Highfield Park', 'Highfield to be Heard' and the 'Highfield Park Trust' pages where relevant. Obviously, comments remain on these shared posts and when 'tagged' or asked questions on these pages the answers given are as professional and factual as possible despite there still being a plethora of unacceptable comments and personal attacks. Those wishing to give feedback are always urged to email the Parish Clerk at clerk@colneyheathparishcouncil.gov.uk or call 01727 8255314 or 07484 520070 with any matters they wish to raise.

The situation is periodically reviewed, however as comments reported over the weekend of 8/9 August resulting in the request and removal of several comments from a social media platform this week it is unlikely that commenting will be recommended to be switched on in the near future, although this will be reported to the HR Committee and Full Council when they meet in early September 2020.