

The Beaconsfield Society - Editorial Policy

The aim of the editorial policy is to offer guidance to all Beaconsfield Society editors and social media contributors. This policy will be made available on the Society's website for public scrutiny. This policy applies to full Society members, appointed editors and associate editors who may be part of other community groups but have access to comment on platforms and forums the Society manages or controls. Being an associate editor means accepting compliance with this policy whenever appropriate. Any concerns regarding this from associate editors should be raised with the editorial group for resolution.

It is important that this policy is viewed in tandem with both the communications strategy agreed in September 2016 and with the issues log established in Q4 2016. Awareness and a working knowledge of these will help editors to post content for any social media accounts and other written engagements with external bodies and stakeholders.

The policy is subject to change from time to time and we would recommend all editors stay up to date with the latest version of the policy at all times.

The editors will meet four times a year as an editorial group to review the policy and resolve any issues arising over the editorial policy, handling complaints, questions and challenges to the policy as they may arise.

The editorial policy of many organisations vary dramatically, with some being very comprehensive and others offering guiding principles. We have decided to adopt a guidance principle approach as this is a voluntary organisation and therefore the needs of the policy are slightly less onerous than a commercial organisation or public body.

The principles are open for review at editorial meetings...

- **Be accurate**

We seek to inform, educate and support local people in making better choices on use of their time, on engaging fully with local groups and events and making informed decisions about issues across the town and the challenges the town faces. To do this we must be as accurate as possible with our postings. We seek to be accurate in portraying all issues, events, and group details and where humanly possible, always checking data in advance of publication.. We do not require two sources for data on all occasions but will endeavour to have this normally.

- **Be fair and even handed**

We encourage debate and participation but do so in an even handed manner. This means presenting all sides to an argument across our social media channels even when this in itself may put us at odds with special interest groups. Keeping an even handed approach to issues does not mean not taking sides but does seek to keep what is presented fair. The Society believes in open, honest and frank debate on all topics we address or seek to change, adapt, prevent or accept and as such we seek sensible polite informed debate whenever possible. We will face challenges to our even handedness on occasions merely because disagreement causes accusations of bias but this should not deter us from commenting purely because we may be challenged.

- **Be positive**

All editors are encouraged to be positive in their comments, and avoid negativity and criticism likely to cause offence. This does not mean we cannot ever be negative on an issue, as objections are frequently seen as

negative by others. If in doubt, be positive though. We should encourage others to be positive in their comments and debate also.

- **Be encouraging**

We seek to encourage better decision-making, better behaviour and better debate in an open communication form. Being encouraging of others to adopt better ways is an important part of our contribution to local civic society. Wherever possible we should adopt an encouraging tone of voice in communications.

- **Be prepared to challenge**

Commenting on town affairs occasionally means having to challenge a stance or opinion or statement: do not be cowed in making a challenge because of the other principles. Our opinions count and can help others to form theirs, we should be prepared to express them.

Alongside these principles we will seek to promote all town events equally whenever possible, we will also try to encourage greater engagement in town affairs. But we do reserve the right not to post everything requested of us.

The Society does encourage debate and request of everyone working on the social media feeds to avoid confrontations with other users, avoid unseemly behaviour and insults, but be prepared to challenge ignorance and misinformation without resorting to negativity.

Every social media platform we use already has a policy for abusive, aggressive or threatening behaviour and we support these policies and terms of use.

We will encourage all users of platforms we create for sharing information to observe these policies from technology providers and we will censure anyone breaking these rules. We will avoid blocking, muting or disabling communications, using this only as a last resort allowing the editorial team to discuss the situation. We will however respond immediately to concerns regarding threats or intimidation as necessary.

The policy is an iterative process so from time to time minor changes will be made without recourse to the full editorial group but significant changes will be discussed at the quarterly meetings.

With regard to content generation and dissemination we will observe social media established norms on redistribution of content and will always endeavour to create our own materials and only curate other material when this is unavailable.

All complaints will be handled at the next editorial group meeting after the complaint date.

The Beaconsfield Society Approved 14 October 2016