Social Media Policy – Thurgoland Parish Council

The Policy

This policy sets out how the Parish Council uses social media and provides guidance to Parish Councillors, employees, and volunteers when engaging on social media in a council-related capacity. The aim is to ensure that social media is used responsibly, lawfully, and in a way that protects the reputation of the Parish Council. This policy relates to the creation and management of a Facebook account in the name of Thurgoland Parish Council.

This policy applies to Parish Councillors, the Clerk, and volunteers when posting on behalf of the Parish Council and sets the rules to ensure correct use of the Facebook account.

The Parish Council uses social media to share information about Parish Council meetings, events and activities, projects of the Parish Council and community events, in order to engage with residents, to promote transparency and to advise residents to official sources of information.

Social media must not be used as a substitute for the formal decision-making processes, which are dealt with formally at the Parish Council meetings.

The main site of information regarding the Parish Council is the Parish Council website and the Parish Council noticeboards.

Management of Social Media

Social media posts will be managed by the Parish Councillors authorised by resolution at a Parish Council meeting, and the Clerk.

- At least two authorised Parish Councillors and the Clerk should have access to the account.
- Account should clearly state that it is the official Thurgoland Parish Council account.
- No extreme political or religious views will be expressed.
- Photographs will not have a direct view of any child's face without prior consent of parent/guardian.
- Postings will **NOT** include confidential information, personal data without consent, offensive, discriminatory, defamatory, or abusive content, comments on live or ongoing complaints, legal matters, or staff issues.
- Comments will not be permitted unless the post specifically requires comment or request for information.
- All social media content must: -
    - Be factual, accurate, and respectful
    - Be consistent with council policies and decisions -
    - Comply with relevant legislation, including data protection, equality, and defamation laws
    - Avoid political bias or promotion of party-political views
- Any comments found on the Parish Council Facebook page will be removed if it includes:
    - Abusive language
    - Offensive to any specific group e.g. racial or sexist
    - Comments which are deemed libellous
    - Any comments deemed to cause or may cause offence
- All posts, where appropriate, will request any follow up to be via e-mail request to the Parish Council Clerk.

Engagement with members of the Public

- The Parish Council welcomes constructive and respectful engagement.
- Social media is not a forum for making official complaints or requests; users should be directed to the Parish Council's formal procedures.
- The Council may moderate or remove comments that are offensive, unlawful, or breach this policy.
- Residents will be encouraged to be "friends" and "follow" the Parish Council Facebook page, but if there is evidence of unacceptable on-line behavior, the Parish Council will remove the individual from the Facebook group, and inappropriate comment removed.
- Private messaging will not be used, and residents directed to contact the Parish Council by e-mail or via the website contact, details to be included in the Facebook profile.
- We reserve the right to delete content, block individuals or report individuals to social media platforms when necessary.

Record Keeping

- Significant decisions or commitments must not be made via social media.
- Any social media interactions that form part of Parish Council business should be retained in accordance with the Parish Council's document retention policies.

Personal Use of Social Media by Parish Councillors

- Councillors are free to use social media in a personal capacity but must make it clear that views are their own.
- Councillors should not disclose confidential information or imply they are speaking on behalf of the Parish Council unless authorised.
- Councillors must comply with the Code of Conduct when using social media.

Complaints and Breaches

- Any alleged breach of this policy should be reported to the Clerk via e-mail.
- Breaches may be dealt with under the Council's disciplinary procedures or Code of Conduct, as appropriate.
- The Clerk and Parish Councillors should not have to put up with abusive or threatening behaviour. When subjected to such behaviour, the council reserves the right to enact its relevant social media policies and may, for example, delete content, block individuals or report individuals to social media platforms when appropriate to do so.
- The Parish Council may need to report issues of poor conduct directly to social media platforms. For instance, if someone has created a 'fake account' or if someone is persistently abusive to the Council.
- The Parish Council reserves the right to report criminal matters it notices on social media to the Police. For instance, hate crime/speech or threats of violence.
- Please get in touch with the Parish Council if you feel that a Parish Councillor, Clerk or a user of our social media has failed to act in a civil and respectful way on our social media.

Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically and updated as required.

Adopted by the Parish Council on: 4th February 2026

Review date: **Review date:** **Review date:**

Social Media Policy Supplement - Civility and Respect

1. Engaging with the Parish Council on social media

- The Parish Council encourages members of the public, local organisations and community groups, members of the press, local councillors and others in our wider community to follow and engage with the council through social media accounts.
- We also encourage everyone in our community to share content from our social media accounts with their own social media networks. This is especially important, for example, during emergency situations or where sharing timely information is essential.
- Individuals and organisations are responsible for the content that they choose to post to their social media accounts. This includes content created by others that individuals or organisations choose to repost, retweet or share.

2. Conduct on social media

- The Parish Council will treat everyone with courtesy and respect on its social media channels, and we therefore ask for the same in return from those who choose to engage with us.
- We ask that the Clerk and Parish Councillors are treated courteously. The Clerk and Parish Councillors should never be subjected to bullying or other forms of abuse or harassment.
- The Clerk and Parish Councillors have the right to carry out their Parish Council duties and work without fear of being attacked or abused. Any behaviour whether that be verbal, physical or in writing, which causes either Parish Councillors or Clerk to feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or threatened, is unacceptable.

3. Reporting a civility and respect-related issue

- The Clerk and Parish Councillors operating the Parish Council's social media accounts will at all times be mindful of the council's relevant policies, procedures and processes, including the Code of Conduct.
- The Parish Council will record and report abuse directed at the Council. The Parish Council may, for example, create screenshots of comments and keep a record of abusive or threatening communications, and may take further action as appropriate.
- The Clerk and Parish Councillors should not have to put up with abusive or threatening behaviour. When subjected to such behaviour, the council reserves the right to enact its relevant social media policies and may, for example, delete content, block individuals or report individuals to social media platforms when appropriate to do so.
- The Parish Council may need to report issues of poor conduct directly to social media platforms. For instance, if someone has created a 'fake account' or if someone is persistently abusive to the Council.
- The Parish Council reserves the right to report criminal matters it notices on social media to the Police. For instance, hate crime/speech or threats of violence.
- Please get in touch with the Council if you feel that a Parish Councillor, Clerk or a user of our social media has failed to act in a civil and respectful way on our social media.