

## Social Media Policy

### 1. Introduction

Social media is an important way for the Parish Council to share information, support community engagement, and help residents stay informed about local matters. Platforms such as Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram and others allow quick communication and can complement our existing channels, including the website, noticeboards, newsletters and statutory notices.

Councillors and employees may also use social media in their personal lives. This policy sets out simple, practical guidance to help everyone use social media responsibly and in a way that protects the Council, its staff and its reputation.

### 2. Purpose of Council Social Media

The Parish Council uses social media to:

- Share timely updates about meetings, decisions and community events
- Promote openness and transparency
- Encourage participation in village life
- Provide clear signposting to services and information

Council social media is not a replacement for formal communication channels and does not form part of the Council's decision-making process.

### 3. Who This Policy Applies To

This policy applies to all councillors and employees of the Parish Council. It covers both:

- Use of official Parish Council social media
- Personal use of social media where it may have an impact on the Council

### 4. What We Mean by "Social Media"

Social media includes any online platform where information can be shared or discussed, such as:

- Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn
- Blogs, forums, WhatsApp groups
- Video and photo-sharing sites such as YouTube or Flickr

This list is not exhaustive.

### 5. Managing Official Council Accounts

- The Clerk is the primary administrator for the Parish Council's official social media accounts.
- Two councillors from the Communications Working Group may also hold administrator rights to support posting and monitoring.
- All administrators are expected to use the accounts in line with this policy and to seek advice from the Clerk where needed.

- Comments and messages will be monitored regularly, and inappropriate or offensive material may be removed.
- Direct messages sent via social media are not considered formal correspondence. Residents should contact the Clerk by email or in writing for official matters.

## **6. Posting on Behalf of the Council**

When posting on official Council accounts:

- Only authorised councillors may post, and they should seek advice from the Clerk if unsure.
- During the pre-election period (“purdah”), councillors’ authority to post will be suspended.
- Councillors should be aware of Electoral Commission rules on election spending, including advertising on personal social media.

## **7. Personal Use of Social Media**

Councillors and employees should be aware that:

- Personal profiles can make individuals identifiable as part of the Parish Council.
- Even with privacy settings, posts may become public.
- Content shared by friends or contacts may reduce privacy.

## **8. Key Principles for Personal and Official Use**

Councillors and employees must not:

- Use the title “Cllr” or “Councillor” on personal accounts
- Present personal views as those of the Parish Council
- Post content that could damage the Council’s reputation
- Share confidential, sensitive, or personal information
- Comment publicly about employees or councillors without their consent
- Share photos or videos of others (especially minors) without permission
- Post or link to offensive, inflammatory, or unlawful material
- Infringe copyright or share third-party content without permission

Good practice includes:

- Being open and honest, while mindful of how posts may be perceived
- Remaining respectful and factual, especially in heated discussions
- Avoiding political or controversial topics on Council channels
- Signposting residents to the correct authority for complaints or concerns

Councillors should also avoid posting views that could suggest predetermination before a Council or Committee meeting, in line with the Localism Act 2011.

## **9. Concerns or Allegations of Misuse**

- Any councillor or employee who feels harassed or offended by online material should inform the Clerk or Chair.
- Complaints about councillors will be handled under the Council’s Complaints Policy, with conduct matters referred to the Monitoring Officer at Dover District Council.
- Complaints about employees will be managed under the Council’s Disciplinary Procedure.