

Communications & Social Media Policy

Policy and Finance Approved: February 2026
Last Reviewed: February 2026
Due for Next Review: February 2029

1. Introduction

Effective communication supports transparency, trust, and accountability between the Council and the community. Social media and digital tools help share information quickly, engage residents, and promote Council work.

This policy guides councillors, staff, and representatives in using all communication channels responsibly, lawfully, and effectively.

2. Purpose and Key Principles

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Define roles and responsibilities for Council communications.
- Promote consistent, accurate, and respectful communication.
- Ensure compliance with legislation and data protection.
- Safeguard the Council's reputation and protect individuals from harm.

Key Principles:

1. **Clarity** – provide clear, timely, factual information.
2. **Engagement** – encourage respectful, two-way dialogue.
3. **Collaboration** – share knowledge, promote services, and support community initiatives.

3. Scope of the Policy

Applies to all councillors, employees, and volunteers acting for the Council, and to all forms of communication including social media, blogs, podcasts, press releases, and correspondence.

Covers both official Council accounts and personal accounts where a Council link is implied.

4. Legal and Ethical Framework

Communications must comply with relevant legislation including:

- Local Government Acts 1986 & 1988
- The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity

- Data Protection Act 2018 & UK GDPR
- Equality Act 2010
- Copyright and intellectual property law

Confidential or personal information must never be disclosed, and images of children or vulnerable adults require written consent.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Executive Officer** – Principal spokesperson, responsible for approving and issuing official communications and press releases.
- **Chairman of the Council & Committee Chairs** – May speak on behalf of the Council in consultation with the Executive Officer.
- **Councillors** – May express personal opinions but must clarify they do not represent Council policy unless authorised.
- **Staff** – Must not share Council information without approval and must comply with employment policies.

All are expected to uphold professionalism and protect the Council's reputation.

6. Media and Public Engagement

- The media are welcome at Council meetings. Filming or recording is permitted in line with Standing Orders, but the Chairman should be informed when this right is exercised.
- Press releases must be factual, unbiased, and issued through the Executive Officer or Communications Officer.
- During election periods, Council publicity must remain strictly neutral. Councillors' individual campaigns must not use Council resources.

7. Social Media Use and Conduct

Council-managed social media accounts are administered by authorised officers under the Executive Officer's supervision.

Content and Moderation

Posts or comments may be removed if they:

- Are unrelated to Council business, offensive, defamatory, false, discriminatory, or politically motivated.
- Breach law, copyright, or public safety.

Expected Conduct

When using social media in any capacity:

- Be truthful, accurate, and respectful; correct errors promptly.
- Keep personal and Council matters separate.
- Avoid disclosing confidential or sensitive information.
- Do not use Council logos on personal accounts.
- Communicate professionally, apolitically, and inclusively.
- Engage constructively and avoid heated exchanges.

Guiding Principles:

Be human, engaging, professional, responsible, and strategic—share useful, factual, and relevant content.

8. Personal Use of Social Media

Councillors and staff should note that personal posts can still reflect on the Council.

- Avoid comments that bring the Council into disrepute.
- Clarify when views are personal.
- Councillors are advised to keep personal and councillor accounts separate.

9. Breaches of Policy

- **Staff:** Breaches may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal for gross misconduct.
- **Councillors:** Breaches may result in referral to the Monitoring Officer under the Code of Conduct.
- **Illegal or criminal activity** (e.g. threats, hate speech, harassment) may be reported to the police.

10. Monitoring and Review

The Executive Officer will monitor and review this policy every three years or earlier if required by legislative or best-practice changes.

11. Related Council Documents

- Members' Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures
- Standing Orders
- Data Protection & Privacy Policy
- Communications Strategy 2024