

# COLLINGHAM WITH LINTON PARISH COUNCIL

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Adapted from the CLPC 2020 social media policy, incorporating the Civility & Respect Pledge

Version: FINAL V1.0 17/09/2025

This social media policy was reviewed and adopted by the council at its meeting held on 17th September 2025.

Signed : *Marianne Moses* Chair

Date: 17/09/2025

Review Date: September 2026

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## **1 Introduction**

“Social Media” is the term for online tools and interactive media that enables users to communicate with each other by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. For the purposes of this policy, the term “Social Media” covers sites and applications including but not restricted to Facebook, Instagram, NextDoor, Twitter, LinkedIn and any similar sites which develop after the creation of this policy. It also includes comments in parish magazines and online newspaper articles.

## **2 Benefits and risks**

The following potential benefits have been identified with the use of social media:

- Ability to connect with harder-to-reach groups
- Real-time updates on emerging situations
- Heightened level of interactivity
- Low cost in comparison with traditional forms of media
- Enhanced transparency
- Building a sense of belonging in a neighbourhood
- Increased resident satisfaction levels

- Help to reduce social problems like vandalism or racism

The following risks have been identified with the use of social media:

- Virus or other malware (malicious software)
- Disclosure of confidential information
- Damage to the reputation of the Council
- Social engineering attacks or "phishing"
- Bullying or witch-hunting
- Civil or criminal action relating to breaches of legislation
- Breach of safeguarding through the use of images or personal details leading to the exploitation of vulnerable individuals

### **3 Who this policy covers**

This policy covers all Councillors. It should be considered in conjunction with the Council's Code of Conduct and relates to all use of social media, whether inside or outside of official capacities. It also covers the general principles of civility and respect and the behaviours expected from all parties when the general public engages with the Parish Council.

### **4 The Parish Council - Who can use social media**

The Parish Clerk would normally have control of any social media sites set up for the Council as a corporate body. Collingham with Linton Parish have taken the decision that a Parish Councillor shall undertake the role of administrator of the full social media provision, whilst the Clerk will administer all activity on the Parish Council .gov.uk website. It is agreed that in the case of social media Councillors will keep their personal life and official capacities separate and will, particularly if allocated the role of social media administrator, create a separate account.

### **5 Councillors - Individual responsibilities**

Individual Councillors using social media should make use of stringent privacy settings if they do not wish them to be accessed by the press and public. In any biography where the Councillor is identified as a Councillor, the account should state that the views are those of the Councillor in question and may not represent the views of the Council. Use of the Council's logo on a personal account must not occur.

- A Councillor should make clear who they are in the profile of any account and whether they are an authorised representative of the Council, unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as a potential threat to personal security. In such instances, the Council's Clerk must be consulted.
- Councillors are personally responsible for the content which they publish on any form of social media. Publishing – or allowing to be published (in the form of a comment) – an untrue statement about a person which is damaging to their reputation may amount to libel.
- Councillors must treat others with respect, avoid personal attacks and not make disrespectful, rude or offensive comments.
- Councillors must comply with equality laws contained within the Equality Act 2010, associated legislation and the Council's Equality Policy. They must not publish anything that might be considered sexist, racist, ageist, homophobic or anti-faith.

## **6 Councillors - Anonymous posts**

When commenting online on any matter relating to the Council, Councillors should identify themselves as a Councillor (for instance in their profile) and make it clear whether or not they are representing the views of the Council. They must not make anonymous posts nor use a pseudonym when making such comments so as to hide their identity. Councillors who fail to identify themselves as a Councillor in breach of this obligation will be deemed to be acting in their official capacity for the purposes of the Code of Conduct and such failure will itself be a breach of the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

## **7 Councillors - Online safety**

Councillors must be aware of their own safety when placing information on the Internet and should not publish information which could give details which could leave them vulnerable. Any Councillor receiving threats, abuse or harassment via their use of social media should report it to the Clerk and/or the police.

\*They should use a secure password (generally more than eight characters long and using a mixture of letters and numbers) and never share their password with anyone.

## **8 Councillors - Information protection**

Councillors must not disclose information, make commitments or engage in activity on behalf of the Council unless they are authorised to do so. This authorisation is made in a full Council meeting via a resolution and noted as "authorised" in meeting minutes. They should not cite or reference customers, partners or suppliers without their prior written consent. They must handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the Council's data protection policies. Social media sites are in the public domain and it is important that Councillors ensure that they are confident of the nature of the information they publish. Comments posted online are permanently available and can be used by media such as newspapers. Councillors must not publish or report on meetings which are private or internal or publish exempt committee reports or private papers. Copyright laws still apply online. Councillors must not use images to which they do not hold the copyright. Information shared should be attributed to the source (i.e. via web link) and Councillors must respect fair-use and financial disclosure laws.

## **9 Councillors - Elections**

The Electoral Commission requires that candidates provide a return of expenditure on any form of advertising or campaign literature - and this includes web advertising. There are additional requirements, such as imprint standards, for materials which can be downloaded from a website. Full guidance for candidates can be found at [www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk). Please note:

- Accounts may need to be closed for a defined period before local and national elections in order to comply with legislation which affects local authorities.
- Political blogs cannot be linked from the Council's website and the Council will not promote Councillors' Twitter accounts during the election purdah period.

## **10 Councillors - Best practise**

Councillors must not use insulting or offensive language or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in a workplace. They must show consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered controversial, such as politics or religion. Social media must not be used to publish content which may result in action for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claims for damages. This includes but is not limited to, material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the Council into disrepute. Corporate social media

must not be used for party political purposes nor specific campaigning purposes as the Council is not permitted to publish material which "in whole or part appears to affect public support for a political party" (Local Government Act 1986). The Council's corporate social media accounts must not be used for such purposes by a Councillor. Councillors must not use the Council's social media accounts to promote personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns, whether or not related to the function of the Council. Further to this:

- Social media must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner.
- Social media must not be used for actions that would put Councillors in breach of the Code of Conduct .
- Use of social media must not breach any equal opportunities or bullying and harassment policies.

## **11 Councillors - Breaches of this policy**

Failure to comply with this policy may result in a formal complaint being made to the Monitoring Officer to be dealt with under the Council's Standards Procedures. Other violations of this policy, such as breaching the Data Protection Act 1988, could lead to criminal or civil action being taken against the individual(s) involved. The Council reserves the right to request the closure of any applications or removal of any content published by Councillors deemed inappropriate or which may adversely affect the reputation of the Council, or put it at risk of legal action.

## **12 Civility and Respect - Engaging with the council on social media**

The 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 corporate 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. Councillors may choose to engage with the community on their own 'councillor' social media accounts. 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.

### **13 Civility and Respect - Conduct on social media**

The 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 council staff and councillors are treated courteously. Council staff and councillors should never be subjected to bullying or other forms of abuse or harassment. Council staff and councillors have the right to carry out their civic duties and work without fear of being attacked or abused. Any behaviour whether that be verbal, physical or in writing, which causes either councillors or council staff to feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or threatened, is unacceptable.

### **14 Civility and Respect - Reporting a civility and respect-related issue**

Council staff and others operating the 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 council will record and report abuse directed at the Council. The Council may, for example, create screenshots of comments and keep a record of abusive or threatening communications, and may take further action as appropriate. Council staff and councillors should not have to put up with abusive or threatening behaviour. When subjected to such behaviour, the council reserves the right to delete content, block individuals or report individuals to social media platforms when appropriate to do so. The Council may also 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 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.

The general public may also report matters to the Council. Please get in touch with the Council if you feel that a councillor, member of staff or a user of our social media has failed to act in a civil and respectful way on our social media.

**You can contact the Clerk to the Council in the following ways:**

- **07456 957391**
- **CLERK@COLLINGHAMLINTONPARISHCOUNCIL.GOV.UK**