



## **Social Media Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

The aim of this policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to parish councillors, council staff, and others who engage with the council using online communications, collectively referred to as social media.

Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing content on the internet.

This policy ensures that the council's use of social media is responsible, lawful and respectful, and complies with relevant legislation including the Localism Act 2011, UK General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act 2018 and Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication with the council.

### **2. Scope**

This policy applies to parish councillors, council staff and anyone communicating with Milton Malsor Parish Council through social media.

The principles of this policy apply to both official council social media accounts and personal social media activity where individuals may be identified as representing the council.

This policy should be read alongside other relevant council policies including the Council's IT and Email Policy and Code of Conduct.

### **3. Definition of Social Media**

This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites including, but not limited to:

- Parish Council website
- Facebook, Instagram and other social networking sites
- X (formerly Twitter) and other micro-blogging sites
- YouTube and other video or podcast platforms
- LinkedIn
- Blogs and discussion forums

### **4. Use of Social Media by the Council**

Social media may be used by the council to:

- Distribute agendas, minutes and meeting dates
- Advertise council events and activities

- Share council news and updates
- Advertise council vacancies
- Share information from partner organisations such as principal authorities, police, libraries, and health services
- Promote information from local community organisations such as schools, sports clubs, charities and community groups
- Direct residents' queries to the Clerk and councillors where appropriate

Only authorised individuals may post on official Milton Malsor Parish Council social media accounts.

## **5. Code of Practice**

When using social media, parish councillors and council staff must be mindful of the information they post in both a personal and council capacity.

All online communication should be respectful, informative, and appropriate.

Content published by the council should be accurate, objective, balanced and informative.

Councillors and staff are responsible for the content they publish online and must ensure that their actions comply with this policy and the Council's Code of Conduct.

Councillors using personal social media accounts should make it clear when they are expressing personal views and not speaking on behalf of the council.

## **6. Unacceptable Use**

Parish councillors and council staff must not:

- Hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms when representing the council
- Present personal opinions as the official view of the council
- Misrepresent or falsely attribute council decisions
- Engage in personal attacks, online arguments, or hostile communications
- Post content that could bring the council into disrepute
- Post offensive language relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief
- Publish defamatory or libellous material
- Post any material that infringes copyright
- Post personal data without lawful authority or consent
- Publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
- Conduct online activity that constitutes bullying, harassment or discrimination
- Engage in any activity that violates the law or constitutes a criminal offence

## **7. Legal Considerations**

Users of social media should be aware that publishing false or damaging statements about an individual may constitute libel under the Defamation Act 2013.

Publishing copyrighted text or images without permission may breach copyright law.  
Publishing personal data without lawful authority may breach the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.  
Publication of obscene or unlawful material may constitute a criminal offence.

Users should also be aware that content published online may remain publicly accessible and could be used as evidence in legal proceedings.

## **8. Predetermination and Bias**

Councillors should be mindful that expressing strong views on matters that are due to be considered by the council may give rise to issues of predetermination or bias.

Where appropriate, councillors may need to declare an interest or withdraw from the decision-making process.

## **9. Moderation of Council Social Media**

The council will appoint a nominated moderator responsible for publishing and monitoring content on official council social media platforms.

The moderator may remove posts or comments from third parties that are:

- Defamatory
- Abusive or offensive
- Misleading
- Spam or promotional material
- Unlawful

The moderator will ensure that content published on council platforms complies with this policy.

## **10. Reporting Concerns**

Anyone with concerns regarding content placed on social media that may denigrate parish councillors, council staff or residents should report the matter to the Clerk.

Misuse of social media that is contrary to this policy or other council policies may result in appropriate action being taken.

## **11. Records and Transparency**

Social media content created by the council may constitute an official record and may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

## **12. Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

**Reviewed by Milton Malsor Parish Council:** March 2026

**Adopted by Milton Malsor Parish Council:** April 2026

**Next Review Date:** November 2026