



Noak Bridge Parish Council

Social Media Policy

Version	Date Adopted	Minute Reference	Review Date
1	25/06/2026	22/2026/03	25/02/2027

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy sets out how Noak Bridge Parish Council ("the Council") will use social media and the standards expected of Councillors, employees and authorised representatives when engaging on social media platforms.

1.2 Social media includes (but is not limited to) Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, LinkedIn, community forums, blogs, message boards, video-sharing platforms and comments on web-based articles.

1.3 This policy aims to:

- Protect the Council's reputation;
- Ensure lawful, consistent and transparent communications;
- Clarify roles and responsibilities;
- Safeguard confidential and personal information; and
- Promote respectful, inclusive and constructive engagement.

1.4 This policy must be read in conjunction with the Council's:

- Standing Orders;
- Press and Media Policy;
- Code of Conduct;
- Equality and Diversity Policy;
- Data Protection Policy; and
- Disciplinary Procedure.

2. Scope of the Policy

2.1 This policy applies to:

- All Councillors;
- All employees;
- Any volunteer or person authorised to post on behalf of the Council.

2.2 The policy applies to both:

- Use of official Council social media accounts; and
- Personal social media use where Council business is discussed or referenced.

2.3 Failure to comply with this policy may result in action under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure (for employees) or referral under the adopted Code of Conduct (for Councillors).

3. Official Council Social Media Accounts

3.1 The Council may operate official social media accounts to:

- Share factual information;
- Publish Council decisions;
- Promote community initiatives and events; and
- Provide updates of public interest.

3.2 The Clerk, as Proper Officer, has overall administrative control of official accounts.

3.3 Only the following may publish content in the Council's name:

- The Clerk;
- The Chairman (where appropriate);
- Any person or Councillor formally authorised by resolution of the Council.

3.4 All content published must:

- Reflect an agreed Council decision or delegated authority;
- Be factual, accurate and lawful;
- Avoid party-political content;
- Avoid expressing personal opinions;
- Comply with the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy.

3.5 Social media must not be used to circumvent the Council's formal decision-making processes.

4. Personal Use of Social Media by Councillors and Employees

4.1 Councillors and employees are entitled to hold personal social media accounts.

4.2 When using personal accounts, individuals must not imply that they are speaking on behalf of the Council unless formally authorised to do so.

4.3 Councillors expressing personal views on Council-related matters are encouraged to include a disclaimer such as:

"The views expressed are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of Noak Bridge Parish Council."

4.4 Councillors and employees must not:

- Disclose confidential or exempt information;

- Pre-empt Council decisions;
- Engage in conduct that would bring the Council into disrepute;
- Use social media to bully, harass or intimidate others;
- Post content that would breach the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy.

4.5 All Councillors must comply with the adopted Code of Conduct when using social media.

4.6 Employees must seek prior approval from the Clerk before posting on social media about Council business in a professional capacity.

5. Data Protection and Confidentiality

5.1 Personal data must only be published where lawful to do so and in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

5.2 Confidential, commercially sensitive or exempt information must never be disclosed.

5.3 Care must be taken when publishing photographs or videos to ensure appropriate consent has been obtained where required.

5.4 Social media communications relating to Council business may constitute official records and may be subject to Freedom of Information requests.

6. Standards of Conduct Online

Whenever using social media in connection with Council business, individuals must:

- 6.1 Be respectful, courteous and professional;
- 6.2 Avoid posting content that is defamatory, abusive, discriminatory, obscene or unlawful;
- 6.3 Avoid escalating heated discussions and seek to respond with factual information where appropriate;
- 6.4 Respect copyright and intellectual property rights;
- 6.5 Avoid publishing personal contact details without consent;
- 6.6 Consider the potential reputational and legal impact on the Council before posting.
- 6.7 Ensure that all engagement reflects the principles set out in the Equality and Diversity Policy.

7. Moderation of Council Social Media Pages

7.1 The Council reserves the right to remove comments or posts on its official pages that are:

- Abusive, defamatory or discriminatory;
- Spam or promotional in nature;
- Unlawful or misleading;
- Irrelevant to the original post.

7.2 Repeated or serious breaches may result in users being blocked from the Council's social media platforms.

7.3 The Council is not responsible for the content of third-party comments posted on its platforms.

8. Pre-Election Period (Purdah)

8.1 During periods of heightened sensitivity, such as local or national elections, the Council will ensure compliance with restrictions on political publicity.

8.2 Official social media accounts must not publish content that could reasonably be perceived as supporting or opposing a political party or candidate.

9. Breaches of this Policy

9.1 Alleged breaches by employees will be addressed under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

9.2 Alleged breaches by Councillors may be referred to the Monitoring Officer under the adopted Code of Conduct.

9.3 Serious misuse of social media may constitute gross misconduct and may, in certain circumstances, amount to a criminal offence or give rise to civil liability.

9.4 The Council may investigate alleged breaches, including reviewing publicly available content and, where appropriate, Council-managed account records.

10. Monitoring and Review

10.1 The Council is responsible for monitoring the operation of this policy.

10.2 The Clerk will recommend any necessary amendments.

10.3 This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required by changes in legislation or best practice.