

Upper Heyford Parish Council Social Media Policy

Reviewed & Approved in the Parish Council Meeting on the 17th July 2025
Minute Reference 19. a)
Next review July 2027

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how Upper Heyford Parish Council will use social media to communicate with the public, promote transparency, and uphold the integrity of the Council. It provides guidance to councillors, employees, and volunteers on appropriate, lawful, and respectful use of social media in both official and personal capacities.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Official Parish Council social media accounts
- Councillors, employees, and volunteers using personal accounts where they identify as part of the Council or engage in Council-related matters
- Platforms including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and community forums

3. Objectives of Parish Council Social Media

Social media may be used to:

- Share information about Council meetings, events, and decisions
- Promote public engagement and local participation
- Inform the public of emergencies, notices, and service updates
- Celebrate community achievements

The Council's social media presence is intended to supplement—not replace—official communication channels such as noticeboards, newsletters, and the parish website.

4. Official Council Accounts

Official accounts will:

- Be administered by the Parish Clerk or a designated officer
- Be used to post approved and factual content
- Avoid political bias or personal opinions
- Not engage in arguments or respond to abusive comments

All posts and responses must reflect the Council's values of respect, impartiality, and service to the community.

5. Conduct Expectations for Councillors and Staff

Councillors and staff using social media, whether personally or in relation to Council business, must:

- Follow the Code of Conduct and act in the public interest
- Not disclose confidential or restricted information
- Avoid posting content that could bring the Council into disrepute
- Not use social media to make personal attacks, bully, or insult individuals or organisations

- Declare conflicts of interest where applicable

Councillors should be especially cautious about expressing personal opinions on controversial or planning matters prior to formal decisions (pre-determination).

6. Inappropriate Use

The following types of content are prohibited from all Council-affiliated or Council-related use of social media:

- Offensive, defamatory, or discriminatory language
- Personal or political attacks
- Misinformation or speculation on confidential matters
- Content that breaches data protection laws or the GDPR

Misuse of social media by councillors may result in referral to the Monitoring Officer for potential breach of the Code of Conduct.

7. Moderation and Public Comments

The Council reserves the right to:

- Hide or remove comments or posts that are abusive, defamatory, spam, or otherwise inappropriate
- Block or report users who repeatedly breach the rules of respectful engagement

A pinned comment or page description should clearly state the Council's moderation policy.

8. Training and Review

Training on appropriate social media use may be offered to councillors and staff. This policy will be reviewed annually or as needed to reflect changes in law, technology, or best practice.

9. Related Documents

- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection & GDPR Policy
- Vexatious Behaviour Policy

10. Contact

For questions about this policy or the use of social media, please contact:

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