

# HASLINGTON

## PARISH COUNCIL

### Social Media Policy

#### 1. Policy Statement

This policy is intended to help councillors and council staff make appropriate decisions about the use of social media. Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet through channels such as Facebook, Instagram, Threads, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok.

This policy outlines the standards the Council requires councillors and staff to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which the Council will monitor the use of social media, and the action to be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.

This policy supplements, and should be read in conjunction with, all other policies and procedures adopted by the Council such as the Member's Code of Conduct.

The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication; it should be seen as a complementary form of communication that can engage more effectively with certain sectors of the community.

This policy and the use of social media may be amended or withdrawn at any time.

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#### 2. Who is Covered by this Policy

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels within the Council, including all elected and co-opted councillors and the Clerk.

The Clerk is the nominated person to moderate and administrate the Council's official social media output. The Clerk will be responsible for posting and monitoring content and ensuring that it complies with this policy.

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#### 3. Scope of the Policy

All members and staff are expected to always comply with this policy to protect the reputation, privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the Council, its services, employees, partners, and community.

Serious breaches of this policy by councillors or staff may be dealt with under the Code of Conduct or relevant procedures. Breaches may include unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, obscene, discriminatory, or offensive content.

The standards of behaviour required by the Code of Conduct apply to online activity in the same way as to other written or verbal communication.

Members should bear in mind that inappropriate conduct online can still attract adverse publicity. Remarks easily withdrawn in person may be permanently published online. Communications on the internet are public and permanent.

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#### **4. Responsibility for Implementation**

The Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.

The Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks.

All councillors and employees should read and understand this policy. Breaches should be reported to the Clerk or Chair.

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#### **5. Social Media Uses**

The Council encourages the use of social media for:

- Posting notices, dates, and details of meetings
- Advertising events and activities organised by the Parish Council
- Sharing Council news and decisions
- Promoting good news stories relevant to the community
- Linking to appropriate websites and resources
- Advertising vacancies
- Sharing information from partners (e.g. Police, Cheshire East Council, Village Hall)
- Sharing information from community groups for public benefit
- Responding to enquiries and providing factual information

Where possible, content should mirror information on the Council's website for consistency.

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#### **6. Social Media Standards – Official Council Platforms**

When participating in official Council social media platforms, the Clerk must:

- Ensure posts are published only via official Council accounts, not personal accounts
- Use professional, factual, and consistent tone
- Spell-check and grammar-check all posts
- Use photographs or graphics where appropriate to aid engagement

- Seek permission before publishing photographs or videos that identify individuals in private or sensitive settings. Where photographs are taken at public events, these may be freely published by the Council. For any images of children, parental consent must always be obtained before use.
- Never post information that breaches legislation, copyright, or confidentiality
- Ensure official responses are concise, factual, and respectful
- Avoid escalating disputes, instead correct misrepresentations calmly and factually
- Remove any defamatory or inappropriate comments promptly

Comments on posts may be enabled or disabled depending on the nature of the post and the likelihood of inappropriate or unhelpful responses. The Council will always encourage members of the public to direct communications to the Council via formal channels (such as email or written correspondence) rather than relying on responses to social media posts.

The Council does not permit residents to post directly on its social media feeds, to ensure content remains relevant and manageable.

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## **7. Councillor Interaction with Council Social Media**

- On occasions where councillors or staff choose to post in the comments section of Council posts from their personal accounts, they must clearly identify themselves by name and role.
- Councillors may share Council posts to their own pages.
- If approached via other forums, councillors should redirect enquiries to the official Parish Council page.

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## **8. Councillor Social Media Standards – Personal Use**

When using personal or councillor-specific social media accounts:

- Personal opinions must not be presented as those of the Council.
  - Council information should be shared from the official page to ensure accuracy.
  - Councillors should not act on behalf of the Council through personal accounts.
  - Avoid statements that may embarrass the Council or damage its reputation.
  - Respect confidentiality and privacy at all times.
  - Avoid inflammatory remarks, personal attacks, or discriminatory language.
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## 9. Councillor Run Social Media Profiles

Councillors may create and manage their own social media pages to promote their work as a councillor.

The following requirements apply:

1. **Profile Format** – Councillor pages on Facebook must be set up as “Pages” that allow the public to like and follow, not as personal profiles requiring friend requests.
2. **Disclaimer Requirement** – The “About” or “Impressum” section of any councillor run profile must include the following disclaimer text:

*“This page is maintained by [Name], Councillor for Haslington Parish Council. The views expressed here do not reflect the views of other councillors and cannot be deemed as the views of Haslington Parish Council in its entirety. Statements reflecting the collective views of Haslington Parish Council will be issued via the official Parish Council channels or website.”*

3. **Consistency** – Where councillors wish to share Council-related information, they should share or repost from the official Haslington Parish Council page to ensure accuracy.
4. **Standards** – Councillors remain bound by the Code of Conduct in all online activity. Content must not be defamatory, discriminatory, or misleading.
5. **Representation of Work** – Councillors must not promote work completed in an individual capacity as being the work of the Council. Any personal initiatives, activities, or achievements should be clearly distinguished from the official work of Haslington Parish Council.

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## 10. Monitoring and Enforcement

- Misuse of social media may constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct and be referred to the Monitoring Officer.
- In serious cases, misuse could amount to a criminal offence.
- Breaches may also be investigated under the Council’s complaints or grievance procedures.

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## 11. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed as required, and at least every 2 years, or sooner if issues arise.

***This policy was adopted by Council at the meeting held on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025.***