

Social Media & Digital Communications Policy

February 2026

1. Introduction

This Policy sets out the standards, roles and processes for the Council's use of digital communications and social media. It applies alongside the Council's Standing Orders, Code of Conduct, Complaints Procedure and the Terms of Reference of the Communications & Media Committee.

2. Scope and Channels

This Policy covers all forms of digital communications and social networking the Council uses now or in future, including but not limited to: the Council website, Facebook, X, YouTube, LinkedIn, blogs/forums, email newsletters and other platforms as adopted by the Council.

3. Who is Covered

The Policy applies to all Councillors, employees and volunteers when acting for, or reasonably perceived to be acting for, the Council. The Councillors' Code of Conduct applies to online activity as it does to other forms of communication.

4. Purpose and Principles

Digital channels will be used to inform and engage the community; promote Council services, meetings and decisions; support local democracy; signpost partner information; share safety and community messages; and support cohesion and resilience. Channels will not be used for personal promotion, advertising sales of personal items, or other content contrary to this Policy.

5. Code of Practice

When communicating online, representatives must be accurate, objective, respectful and mindful of confidentiality and privacy. They must not publish personal data without permission, make defamatory or discriminatory remarks, post obscene or unlawful content, or present personal opinions as those of the Council.

6. Managing Accounts and Roles

The Council appoints the Parish Manager and the Chair of Council as ****Lead Moderators****. The Communications & Media Committee may appoint up to two ****Deputy Moderators**** to provide cover and capacity.

Lead Moderators are responsible for day-to-day operations: content creation and posting, routine monitoring and moderation, and temporary changes to account status/settings. They may delegate tasks to staff as appropriate.

The Committee sets the communications strategy, approves campaigns and sensitive content as required, and receives regular reports.

7. Press and Media Statements

All press statements must be approved by both (a) the Chair of Council and (b) the Communications & Media Committee before release.

In time-critical circumstances, a short factual ****holding statement**** may be issued by a Lead Moderator with the Chair's approval and must be followed by a full press statement after Committee approval at the earliest opportunity.

8. Comments, Contact and Responsiveness

Social pages are not monitored 24/7. Comments may be disabled by default or enabled for specific posts. Where enabled, comments are not treated as formal contact with the Council. Formal enquiries must be made via the channels listed on the Council's website "Contact us" page.

9. Moderation and Escalation

Moderators may hide or remove posts, report content to platform hosts and block accounts that breach this Policy (including defamatory, discriminatory, obscene or unlawful content, or the publication of personal data).

High-risk matters (potential defamation, safeguarding concerns, threats, suspected illegality, personal data breaches, or election-period sensitivities) must be escalated to the Chair of Council and notified to the Committee.

10. Data Protection and Records

A simple moderation log will be maintained for all hides/deletes/blocks, recording date/time, platform, link/screenshot, reason, actioning moderator and outcome. Logs will be retained for 24 months to support complaints handling, transparency and data-protection obligations.

11. Pre-Election Period ("Purdah")

During the pre-election period, communications will be factual and non-political. The Council will avoid material which could be perceived as influencing public support for a political party or candidate, will suspend discretionary campaigns, and will refer relevant media enquiries to the Returning Officer where appropriate.

12. Complaints and Appeals

Complaints about Council administration or potential breaches of the Code of Conduct will be handled under the Council's Complaints Procedure and relevant statutory processes. Moderation decisions may be reviewed by the Parish Manager (or Chair where appropriate) and reported to the Committee.

13. Review and Version Control

This Policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner if required by changes in law, platform rules or Council decision.

Approved by Council: _____ (Minute ref: _____)

Appendix A – Scheme of Delegation (summary)

Activity	Who can act	Notes
Routine posts (meeting notices, agendas, factual updates, partner signposts)	Lead Moderators; delegated staff	Within strategy and this Policy.
Urgent safety notices / emergency holding lines	Lead Moderators with Chair approval where practicable	Full statement to follow if required.
Press statements (media-facing releases)	Chair of Council AND Communications & Media Committee	Mandatory prior approval; see Section 7.
Moderation (hide/delete/block)	Lead/Deputy Moderators	Log required; escalate high-risk issues.
Create/temporarily close social accounts	Lead Moderators	Inform Committee; permanent closure requires Council resolution.