

Social Media Policy

March 2026

1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to set out how Langford Parish Council will use social media and other online communication tools to engage with residents, partners and stakeholders in a positive, lawful and constructive way. The policy aims to:

- Promote effective communication with the community
- Protect the reputation of the Parish Council
- Ensure compliance with legislation including data protection, defamation and equality law
- Provide clear guidance to Councillors, employees and volunteers on acceptable use
- Establish a consistent approach to moderation and responding to online content.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All official parish Council social media accounts and websites
- Councillors when acting in their role as elected members
- Parish Council employees and contractors
- Any individual authorised to post on behalf of the Council

It covers all forms of social media including (but not exclusively) Facebook, X/Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, community forums, messaging services and any future platforms adopted by the Parish Council.

3. Objectives of Parish Council Social Media

The Parish Council will use social media as an information-only channel to:

- share information about Council services, meetings and events
- promote community activities and local initiatives
- raise awareness of how residents can participate in parish Council meetings and consultations
- signpost to partner organisations and public services

The Parish Council does not use social media to debate issues, gather formal feedback, or receive service requests.

Residents are encouraged to engage with the Parish Council by:

- writing to, emailing or telephoning the Parish Clerk
- attending Parish Council meetings and public participation sessions
- using the formal consultation or complaints processes where applicable

Social media will not replace formal methods of communication such as Council meetings, statutory notices or the official complaints process.



4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Parish Clerk is responsible for the day-to-day management of official accounts. Only the Parish Clerk may post on behalf of the Langford Parish Council. No Councillor, employee, contractor or volunteer is permitted to publish content directly to official Parish Council social media accounts.

- All proposed posts must be approved by the Chairperson prior to publication, either through formal agreement at a meeting or by written approval via email or the Council's agreed WhatsApp group.
- Councillors must make clear when they are expressing personal views on their own accounts and must not present those views as being on behalf of the Parish Council.
- The Parish Council retains ownership and control of all official accounts and content.
- The Parish Clerk is responsible for the day-to-day administration of accounts, including scheduling approved posts and ensuring compliance with this policy.

5. Acceptable Use

Posts must be accurate, fair and respectful; not disclose confidential or personal information; avoid political bias or promotion of individual Councillors; comply with the Councillor Code of Conduct; and respect copyright and intellectual property rights.

Abusive, threatening or discriminatory language, defamatory statements, commercial advertising not approved by the Council, personal data without consent, and material that could prejudice legal or planning processes are not permitted.

6. Information-Only Approach and Comments

The Parish Council uses social media as an information and noticeboard service only. Comments will be turned off on all official Facebook posts and other platforms wherever this function is available. This approach ensures that all enquiries are managed consistently and through official channels, protects personal data and confidentiality, prevents the spread of misinformation, and avoids the Parish Council engaging in debate outside formal governance processes.

Residents wishing to contact the Parish Council should do so via the Parish Clerk by email, telephone, in writing, or through attendance at Parish Council meetings or by using the formal complaints procedure. Any comments posted directly to Parish Council pages, where this is technically possible, will not be responded to and may be removed. The Council will include wording on its profiles stating that social media accounts are information-only and not monitored for service requests.

7. Legal Considerations

All social media activity must comply with the Data Protection Act and UK GDPR, Equality Act 2010, defamation law, copyright and intellectual property legislation, and the Local Government Act and Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

8. Elections and Political Sensitivity

During the pre-election period (purdah) the Council will avoid publishing material that could influence voters, not promote individual candidates or political parties, and restrict communications to factual service information only.

9. Complaints and Formal Decisions

Social media is not an official route for submitting complaints, reporting urgent incidents, or requesting Council decisions. Residents will be directed to the Parish Council's formal complaints or reporting procedures.

10. Security

Account passwords will be held securely by the Parish Clerk. Two-factor authentication will be enabled where available. Access will be removed promptly when staff or Councillors leave office.

11. Monitoring and Record Keeping

Significant communications may be retained in line with the Council's retention policy. Screenshots may be taken where necessary to evidence inappropriate content.

12. Breach of Policy

Failure to follow this policy may result in removal of posting rights, referral to the Monitoring Officer where the Councillor Code of Conduct may be breached, or disciplinary action for employees.

13. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if legislation or best practice changes.

Adopted by Langford Parish Council

Date: _____

Minute Reference: _____

Signed – Chair of the Council: _____

Signed – Parish Clerk: _____

Review Date: _____