

COLLINGHAM *Parish Council*

Social Media Policy

Updated: October 2025

Next Review: October 2026 (or sooner if required)

1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to set out a Code of Practice for the use of social media by Collingham Parish Council. It aims to promote transparent, respectful, and effective communication with residents, partners, and other stakeholders.

Social media is used by the Council to:

Inform the public about Council meetings, decisions, and initiatives

- Share urgent or important information (e.g. floods, road closures)
- Promote community events, opportunities, and good news
- Encourage participation in local democracy

This policy applies to all Councillors, the Clerk, and anyone authorised to post on behalf of the Council. It also provides guidance to members of the public engaging with the Council online.

Platforms covered include, but are not limited to:

- Parish Council website
- Facebook, Instagram, Threads, X (Twitter)
- YouTube or other video hosting platforms
- WhatsApp community groups and discussion forums
- Email and other online channels

Social media supplements, but does not replace, traditional forms of communication such as noticeboards, newsletters, and the parish website.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

The Clerk will act as both moderator and Webmaster, responsible for posting and monitoring content, maintaining the website, and ensuring consistency across all channels. The Assistant Clerk will act as the Deputy Moderator in the Clerk's absence.

Moderators are responsible for:

- Posting and monitoring content
- Ensuring compliance with this policy and legal obligations
- Removing inappropriate, defamatory, or offensive material
- Reporting concerns to the Clerk or Council as needed

Moderators will receive basic training in digital communication, accessibility, and safeguarding.

All official accounts will clearly identify the Parish Council. Councillors should not post Council-related content from personal profiles.

3. Content Standards

All content shared on official channels must be:

- Accurate, factual, and balanced
- Respectful and written in plain English
- Accessible (including alt text for images and captions for videos where possible)
- Consistent with the Council's branding and logo

Posts will not include party-political content or promote individual councillors. Tone should be informative, friendly, and neutral.

The Council will produce a simple annual content plan identifying key themes (e.g. environment, events, consultations) to guide social media activity.

4. Community Interaction and Moderation

The Council welcomes community engagement online. However, posts or comments that include the following will be hidden or removed:

- Offensive, discriminatory, or abusive language
- Personal attacks or defamatory remarks
- Misinformation or false claims
- Content breaching confidentiality or data protection laws
- Spam or commercial advertising

Inappropriate content may be retained offline as evidence if further action is required.

Routine responses will normally be made within five working days, unless the issue requires Council discussion. The Clerk or moderator will refer complex or contentious matters to the full Council for consideration at the next available meeting.

During emergencies (e.g. flooding, public safety incidents), moderators may post urgent updates as appropriate.

5. Data Protection, Copyright, and Legal Compliance

The Council will comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018. Personal data must not be shared without consent.

All material posted online must comply with copyright law. Only use original content or items shared under a suitable licence (e.g. Creative Commons). Written consent must be obtained before publishing photographs or videos featuring identifiable individuals, especially children.

Social media content may be subject to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and public record requirements.

6. Cybersecurity and Safeguarding

All official accounts must:

- Use strong, unique passwords and two-factor authentication
- Keep recovery details up to date
- Immediately report any suspected account compromise or online abuse

Posts and interactions must not endanger the safety or privacy of residents, councillors, or staff. All activity must comply with the Council's Safeguarding Policy.

7. Use by Councillors

Councillors must adhere to the Members' Code of Conduct in all online activity. They should:

- Clearly separate personal and Council-related accounts
- Avoid publishing views that could appear to predetermine a Council decision (especially on planning matters)
- Avoid party-political or campaign material on Council platforms

Blurred identities can lead to confusion; councillors should assume any online activity may be linked to their public role.

8. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review

The Clerk will keep a basic record of social media engagement (reach, follower growth, key interactions) to support annual review.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation, technology, or platform rules change.

Appendix A – Legal Guidance

- Libel: Do not publish or permit untrue statements that could damage someone's reputation.
- Copyright: Do not copy text or images without permission.
- Data Protection: Do not share personal data without consent.
- Obscenity: Avoid publishing or linking to offensive or illegal content.
- Elections: Follow Electoral Commission guidance on online campaigning and imprints.

Appendix B – Quick Reference Guide

Do:

- Be polite, factual, and transparent.
- Use plain English and correct grammar.
- Credit sources where possible.
- Report any concerns to the Clerk.

Don't:

- Post personal opinions as Council policy.
- Share unverified information.
- Use social media for personal or party-political promotion.
- Engage in arguments or hostile exchanges.