Nettleham
Parish Council

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Purpose and Scope

This policy establishes standards for the Council's official social media channels and provides guidance to councillors, employees and authorised representatives using social media in connection with Council business.

It applies to platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube and comparable online services.

The Council website and email are governed by relevant communications, information governance and security arrangements.

This policy does not restrict lawful personal expression, legitimate criticism, protected disclosures or statutory rights.

Official Council Communications

Official accounts are used to publish accurate, accessible and timely information about Council services, decisions, meetings, consultations, vacancies and community activities.

Posts must distinguish confirmed Council decisions from proposals and individual opinions. Official accounts must not be used for party-political campaigning or to promote candidates. Additional care must be taken during election periods.

Social media supplements, but does not replace, statutory notices or formal channels.

Responsibility and Authorisation

The Clerk has operational responsibility for official accounts, subject to Council decisions and delegated authority.

The Clerk may authorise named employees to publish routine material and moderate comments. Sensitive statements, disputed matters and significant policy announcements should be approved through appropriate delegated or Council arrangements.

Councillors must not purport to speak for the Council without authorisation. Account administrators and permissions shall be documented and reviewed, including when personnel change.

Councillors and Employees Conduct

Those communicating in an official capacity must be respectful, accurate and professional, avoid harassment, discrimination, threats, personal attacks and misleading statements, respect confidentiality, copyright and data protection and avoid publishing personal information without an appropriate lawful basis.

Councillors may express personal opinions and disagreement with Council decisions, provided they do not misrepresent those views as the Council's official position and comply with the Code of Conduct where applicable. Staff using personal accounts remain subject to applicable employment duties but this policy does not impose a blanket ban on lawful criticism or private expression.

Adopted 17th November 2026
Review Date: November 2027

Interests and decision-making

Expressing a view before a meeting does not, of itself, establish predetermination or a disclosable interest. Councillors must comply with the law on decision-making and interests, consider relevant information with an open mind where required, and follow the adopted Code of Conduct.
Privacy, images and safeguarding

Only publish personal data where there is an appropriate lawful basis and legitimate Council purpose. Check privacy notices and any necessary permissions before sharing photographs, videos or identifying details, particularly concerning children or vulnerable people. Consent is not the only lawful basis for processing, but safeguarding and privacy risks must be considered. Do not publish confidential papers, personnel information, complaints correspondence or private contact details without lawful authority.

Public Comments and Moderation

The Council welcomes respectful disagreement and constructive criticism. Comments must not be removed merely because they criticise the Council or councillors.

The Council may hide, remove or restrict content involving threats, harassment, discriminatory abuse, unlawful disclosures of personal information, spam, impersonation or other unlawful material.

Potentially defamatory allegations should be assessed on their facts; seek advice where appropriate.

Restrictions must be necessary and proportionate. Where practicable, record the reason for moderation, retain evidence of serious incidents securely and provide a route to request reconsideration through the Clerk.

Repeated serious breaches may justify temporary or ongoing restrictions, subject to review.

Enquiries, Complaints and Information Requests

Social media is not an emergency reporting service and may not be continuously monitored. Formal complaints should be directed to the Council's complaints procedure.

Any apparent Freedom of Information request, Environmental Information request or personal data access request received through social media must be promptly referred to the Clerk for assessment under the relevant legislation.

Do not disclose confidential case details in public replies.

Account security and records

Use strong unique passwords, multifactor authentication where available and appropriately restricted administrator access. Keep an up-to-date record of official accounts and authorised users.

Suspected compromise or personal data breaches must be reported immediately to the Clerk and handled under the Data Breach Policy. Council business conducted through social media may constitute a Council record and must be retained or captured where required by the retention schedule and applicable law.

10. Concerns, breaches and review

Concerns about official posts or moderation should be reported to the Clerk; concerns involving the Clerk should be directed to the Chair for appropriate handling. Employee conduct issues will be considered under relevant employment procedures; councillor conduct complaints under the applicable Code of Conduct arrangements. Any response must be proportionate and follow due process. This policy will be reviewed annually or earlier following material changes in legislation, platforms or Council practice.