

Creswell Parish Council

Social Media Policy

1. Introduction

Creswell Parish Council recognises that social media can be a valuable tool for communicating with residents, sharing information and promoting transparency. This policy sets out how social media is to be used safely, responsibly and appropriately on behalf of the Council.

This policy applies to all Councilors, the Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), employees and any person authorised to post on or manage the Council's social media accounts.

2. Aims of the Policy

The aims of this policy are to: - Ensure consistent and appropriate use of social media - Protect the reputation of the Council - Ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements - Provide clear guidance to Councilors and officers

3. Scope

This policy covers: - Official Council social media accounts - Use of social media by Councilors and officers when referring to Council business - Interaction with members of the public via social media

4. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

This policy should be read in conjunction with: - UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 - Freedom of Information Act 2000 - Local Government Act 1972 - Local Government Transparency Code - The Council's Data Protection Policy - The Council's IT & Digital Communications Policy - The Members' Code of Conduct

5. Official Council Social Media Accounts

- Social media accounts are owned by the Council, not individuals
- Only authorised persons may post on behalf of the Council
- Login details must be kept secure and passed to the Clerk when roles change
- Accounts must be maintained in a professional and neutral manner

6. Content and Tone

All content posted on Council social media accounts must: - Be factual, accurate and relevant to Council business - Be respectful, non-discriminatory and non-political - Avoid inflammatory or emotive language - Not disclose confidential or personal data

The Council must not use social media for political campaigning or to support any political party or candidate.

7. Accuracy and Corrections

Reasonable steps must be taken to ensure information shared is accurate and up to date. Where an error is identified, it should be corrected promptly and transparently.

8. Interaction with the Public

- Social media may be used to share information and signpost residents to appropriate channels
- Social media should not be used to debate individual complaints or disputes
- Formal complaints must be directed to the Council's official complaints procedure
- Responses should be timely, courteous and proportionate

9. Moderation and Comments

- The Council may monitor comments on its social media accounts
- The Council reserves the right to remove or hide comments that are:
 - Offensive, abusive or discriminatory
 - Defamatory or misleading
 - Unlawful or incite illegal activity
 - Spam or advertising

A clear moderation statement should be published on the Council's website or social media pages.

10. Use of Personal Social Media Accounts

- Councillors and officers are personally responsible for content posted on their own accounts
- When referring to Council business, individuals must make clear they are expressing personal views
- Councillors must not disclose confidential information or breach the Code of Conduct
- Care should be taken not to bring the Council into disrepute

11. Data Protection and Privacy

- Personal data must not be shared via social media without a lawful basis
- Images of individuals must only be shared with appropriate consent where required
- Messages received via social media that contain personal data should be handled in accordance with data protection legislation

12. Record Keeping and FOI

- Social media content relating to Council business may constitute a public record
- Posts, messages and comments may be subject to Freedom of Information requests
- Where appropriate, records should be retained in line with the Council's Retention Schedule

13. Breaches of Policy

Any breach of this policy may result in: - Removal of posting rights - Referral to the Chair or Council - Action under the Members' Code of Conduct

14. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years, or sooner if required by changes in legislation or guidance.

Adopted by Creswell Parish Council: 2nd February 2026

Review date: May 2027