



ALVANLEY PARISH COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

1. Introduction

This policy sets out guidelines for the responsible and professional use of social media and electronic communication by Alvanley Parish Council and its members. It aims to ensure that all online interactions reflect the council's commitment to professionalism, integrity, and transparency while promoting community interests.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all forms of electronic communication, including but not limited to, social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc.), emails, website content and online forums. It applies to:

- any official social media accounts;
- any social media activity conducted by parish councillors or council representatives in their official capacity; and
- the Alvanley Parish Council website.

3. Principles of Use

The parish council recognises the value of social media in engaging with the community. However, all communication should adhere to the following principles:

- professionalism and respect - all interactions should be conducted in a professional manner, avoiding inflammatory or inappropriate comments;
- accuracy and transparency - information shared must be factual, objective, and aligned with official council decisions and policies;
- impartiality - councillors must not engage in political speculation or commentary about the intentions of any political party or individual representing a political party; and
- community focus - any promotions or advertisements must be strictly limited to community services and initiatives beneficial to local residents. Private businesses or organisations should not be advertised unless they are part of a council-led initiative or event or they have provided a service to the community that the council wishes to acknowledge.

4. Guidelines for Councillors' Social Media Use

When engaging with social media in an official capacity or where a connection to the parish council may be inferred, councillors should:

- maintain a professional image - avoid making personal remarks that could undermine the reputation of the council;
- refrain from speculation - do not engage in discussions about political intentions, policies, or individual politicians;
- avoid online debates - councillors should not engage in debates on social media platforms. Responses to inquiries should be short factual statements that provide clear information and direct residents to attend parish council meetings for further discussion;
- respect confidentiality - no confidential or sensitive information should be shared on social media or in electronic communication; and
- remain lawful and ethical - ensure all interactions comply with relevant legal and ethical standards, including data protection laws and the Code of Conduct.

5. Official Social Media Accounts

Any official social media accounts will be managed to:

- provide updates on council activities, meetings and decisions;
- share relevant public information for the benefit of the local community; and
- respond to general inquiries with factual information and signpost residents to formal council channels;

Content posted on official accounts must not endorse or criticise political parties, candidates, or politically sensitive topics, contain personal opinions of councillors or staff or engage in arguments or controversial discussions.

6. Use of Email and Electronic Communication

Emails and other forms of electronic communication should be professional, clear, and respectful.

Official council business should be conducted through designated council email accounts, avoiding the use of personal email addresses for council matters.

Councillors and staff must be mindful of GDPR regulations when handling personal data in electronic communication.

7. Monitoring & Enforcement

The clerk, or a designated administrator, will oversee the management of the council's social media presence. Any breaches of this policy may result in appropriate action, including referral to the Monitoring Officer or other relevant authorities. If a councillor is found to have used social media in a manner inconsistent with this policy, the matter may be reviewed and addressed in accordance with the council's Code of Conduct.

8. Conclusion

This policy is designed to support constructive and professional engagement with the community while protecting the integrity of the parish council. All councillors and staff must adhere to these guidelines to maintain a respectful and transparent online presence.

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