

LINKINHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

Communications and Social Media Policy

Introduction A revolution is taking place in how we communicate. The world is experiencing the biggest ever change in how information is created and owned, as well as the speed in which it can be shared. This is changing the way we live, work and even how we speak and think. Social media is a blanket term applied to a range of online multimedia tools that are used for creating content and two-way communication. They can be accessed via your smartphone, PC, laptop, tablet or smart TV. All social media accounts are free of charge and can be set up quickly and easily from an Internet page.

1. Policy statement

1.1. This policy is intended to help employees/elected members make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as social networking websites, forums, message boards, blogs or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

1.2. This policy outlines the standards the Council require employees to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which your use of social media will be monitored and the action that will be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.

2. The scope of the policy

2.1. All employees are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the Council.

2.2. Breach of this policy by employees may be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal. 2.3. Breach of this policy by elected members will be dealt with under the Code of Conduct.

3. Responsibility for implementation of the policy

3.1. The Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.

3.2. The Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to our work.

3.3. All employees should ensure that they take the time to read and understand this policy. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the Chair or the Clerk, who will act in line with the Complaints procedure and policy.

3.4. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Clerk.

4. Using social media sites in our name

4.1. Staff and elected members are permitted to post material on a social media website in the name of the Council and on its behalf in accordance with the rules and scope of this policy.

4.2. If you are not sure if your comments are appropriate do not post them until you have checked with the Clerk/Chair.

5. Using social media

5.1. The Council recognises the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about the Council and the support and services we provide to the community. It also recognises the importance of our employees and councillors joining in and helping shape community conversation and direction through interaction in social media. a) Before using social media on any matter which might affect the interests of the Council you must have read and understood this policy and b) Employees must have gained prior written approval to do so from the Clerk.

6. Rules for use of social media: Whenever you are permitted to use social media in accordance with this policy, you must adhere to the following general rules:

6.1. Do not upload, post or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.

6.2. Any employee who feels that they have been harassed or bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform the Clerk/Chair.

6.3. Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with the Clerk/Chair.

6.4. Do not up load, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.

6.5. Before you include a link to a third-party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit you to link to it.

6.6. When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.

6.7. Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people’s perceptions of the Council.

6.8. You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools.

6.9. Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.

6.10. Don’t discuss colleagues without their prior approval.

6.11. Always consider others’ privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion.

6.12. Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish

anyone else's contact details.

7. Monitoring use of social media websites

7.1. Employees should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for Council purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken against employees under our Disciplinary Procedure and councillors under the Code of Conduct.

7.2. Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and the Council.

7.3. In particular a serious case of uploading, posting forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will probably amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):

a) pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);

b) a false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;

c) material which is offensive, obscene, criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the Council and their councillors or our employees;

d) confidential information about the organisation or anyone else

e) any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, whether for you or the organisation); or

f) material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

Any such action will be addressed under the Disciplinary Procedure/Code of Conduct and may result in summary dismissal.

7.4. Where evidence of misuse is found we may undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or managers involved in the investigation. If necessary, such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.

7.5. If you notice any use of social media by other employees in breach of this policy please report it to the Clerk/Chair.

8. Monitoring and review of this policy

8.1. The Council shall be responsible for reviewing this policy annually to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

Date of review	Reviewed by	Amendments	Minute number
9th November 2026	Full Council	n/a	2026/60