



Appleton Parish Council

Appleton Parish Hall, Dudlow Green Road, Appleton, WA4 5EQ

Social Media Policy

Adopted by Appleton Parish Council by resolution on 17 June 2025 (minute 7) and will be reviewed periodically thereafter.

1. Purpose

1.1 social media is an established and valuable form of communication that enables Appleton Parish Council ("the Council") to engage more effectively with residents, local organisations, and partner bodies.

1.2 This Policy sets out how the Council will use social media responsibly and appropriately to:

- share information and updates.
- promote council activities and events.
- support transparency and engagement; and
- protect the Council, councillors and staff from legal and reputational risk.

1.3 This Policy complements and must be read alongside the **Councillor Code of Conduct**, Data Protection policies, and relevant legislation.

2. Scope

2.1 social media include websites and online platforms that enable interaction and communication, including but not limited to:

- Facebook
- X (formerly Twitter)
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Blogs and forums

2.2 This Policy applies to:

- all official social media accounts operated by or on behalf of the Council; and
- any social media communication made by councillors or officers when acting, claiming to act, or giving the impression of acting in their official capacity.

3. Use of Social Media by the Council

3.1 The Council currently uses **Facebook** as its primary social media platform to:

- provide up-to-date information on council meetings and activities.
- publicise events and Parish Hall use.
- share relevant information from partner organisations; and
- receive comments and suggestions from residents and local organisations.

3.2 social media will not be used as a substitute for formal decision-making or statutory notices.

4. Responsibility and Accountability

4.1 The **Parish Clerk and/or Assistant Clerk** have delegated responsibility for:

- managing and maintaining the Council's website and official social media accounts.
- ensuring content is accurate, lawful and appropriate.

4.2 Individual councillors may assist with moderation or administration of Council social media accounts only with the agreement of the Clerk and must comply with this Policy and the Code of Conduct.

4.3 The Clerk reserves the right to remove or moderate content that does not comply with this Policy.

5. Key Principles

5.1 Social media communication is immediate, public and permanent. All posts and comments should therefore be:

- accurate.
- factual.
- proportionate; and
- carefully considered before publication.

5.2 Councillors should be mindful that comments made on personal social media accounts may still be associated with their role and could bring the Council into disrepute.

6. Acceptable Use – Council Communications

Council social media content must:

- be civil, relevant and respectful in tone.
- not be party political.
- not make commitments on behalf of the Council unless formally authorised.

Council social media content must not:

- be illegal, defamatory, libellous, abusive, threatening, obscene or offensive.
- contain discriminatory or prejudicial language.
- include personal data unless lawful and necessary.
- breach copyright or intellectual property rights.
- infringe data protection legislation (UK GDPR).

7. Use of Social Media by Councillors

7.1 Councillors are not required to have personal social media accounts.

7.2 Where councillors do use social media:

- they should clearly state whether they are speaking in a personal capacity or as a councillor.

- they must comply with the **Councillor Code of Conduct** whenever they act or appear to act in an official capacity.

7.3 Councillors must not:

- make representations or commitments on behalf of the Council without authority.
- disclose confidential or exempt information.
- bring the Council into disrepute.

7.4 Councillors are encouraged to engage constructively with residents but should avoid lengthy or contentious debates online.

8. Social Media Conduct Guidelines

Respect

Do not make personal attacks or post rude, disrespectful or offensive comments. Treat others with courtesy.

Equality

Do not post content that could be considered racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, discriminatory or anti-faith. All equality legislation must be complied with.

Bullying and Harassment

Do not post content that could be interpreted as bullying, harassing, intimidating or threatening.

Confidentiality

Do not disclose:

- information given in confidence; or
- information that you reasonably believe to be confidential.

Separation

Councillors are encouraged to:

- keep personal and councillor profiles separate.
- regularly check privacy settings.

Be aware that you may still be regarded as acting in an official capacity if you publish information obtained through your role as a councillor.

9. Legal and Regulatory Considerations

Failure to comply with legislation may result in legal action against the individual councillor and/or the Council.

Key risks include:

Libel and Defamation

Publishing false statements about individuals or organisations may give rise to defamation claims.

Copyright

Images, videos and text must not be used without permission unless the Council owns the copyright or has a lawful right to share the content.

Data Protection

Personal data must not be published without a lawful basis. Consent must be explicit and cannot be assumed.

Bias and Predetermination

Councillors must not express views that suggest they have predetermined an issue that is subject to council decision-making, particularly in quasi-judicial matters such as planning.

10. Review and Updates

10.1 This Policy will be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary to reflect:

- changes in legislation.
- guidance from the Monitoring Officer.
- changes in social media platforms or usage.

10.2 Any amendments will be communicated to councillors and published on relevant Council platforms.