



Social Media Policy

1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to Beetham Parish Councillors in the use of online communications, collectively referred to as social media. 'Social media' is the term used to describe methods of posting, aggregating and sharing various forms of user-generated content (i.e. content that is created and posted voluntarily by users of the website) on various online platforms. The policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):

- Beetham Parish Council website
- Parish Council emails
- Facebook, LinkedIn, Next-door and other social networking sites
- Twitter/X and other micro blogging platforms
- Instagram and other photo and video sharing sites
- YouTube, TikTok and other video clips and podcast sites
- Blogs and discussion forums such as Reddit

2 EXISTING POLICIES

The policy sits alongside relevant existing policies which need to be taken into consideration. The principles of this policy apply to Parish Councillors. It is also intended for guidance for others communicating with the Parish Council.

Aspects of the Members' Code of Conduct apply to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. Online content should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate. What you write on the internet should be treated as public and permanent.

No direct costs will be incurred by implementing social media

The use of social media is not to replace existing forms of communication used by the Council. The Beetham Parish Council website and other forms of social media will be used to enhance existing forms of communication. Therefore, existing means of communication should continue with social media being an additional option.

3 GUIDELINES FOR USE

In the main, councillors have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failures to comply with the law may have more serious consequences. There are some additional duties around using their websites for electoral campaigning and extra care needs to be taken when writing on planning matters, see General Guidance below.

1. The Proper Officer (Clerk) will be the moderator responsible for posting on the Parish Council website, ensuring that it complies with the social media Policy.

2. The social media may be used to:

- Post minutes and dates of meetings
- Advertise events and activities



- Advertise vacancies
- Refer resident queries to the Clerk and all other councillors.

Facebook may be used to support the website information above. Emails will be used to distribute information on Council business.

4 INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATIONS

Individual Parish Councillors are personally responsible for what they post, both in a personal and council capacity. Councillors are also personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published email address which is used for council business. Councillors are strongly advised to have separate council and personal email addresses.

5 CODE OF PRACTICE

Guidance when using social media, including email.

1. All social media sites in use should be checked and updated on a regular basis and ensured that the appropriate security and privacy settings are in place.

2. In any online communication:

a) Be responsible and respectful; direct, informative, brief and transparent. Keep the tone of your comments respectful and minimise the use of capital letters. Avoid personal attacks, online fights, and hostile communications.

b) When commenting on any matter relating to the Parish Council, Councillors should identify themselves as a Councillor (for instance on their profile) and make it clear when they are representing the views of the Council. They must not make anonymous posts or use a pseudonym when making such posts so as to hide their identity.

c) Parish Councillors should not present themselves in a way that might cause harm or embarrassment. All Parish Councillors need to be mindful of the information they post online and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council, or that may bring the Council into disrepute or are contrary to the Council's Code of Conduct or any other relevant policies.

d) Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks. Language that may be deemed as offensive or discriminatory in regard to race, sexuality, disability, nationality, gender, age or religious beliefs should not be published on any social media site.

e) Never use an individual's name unless you have written permission to do so.

f) Permission to publish photographs or videos on social media sites should be sought from the person or organisations in the video or photograph before being uploaded.

g) Due care should be taken that log-in credentials such as passwords and security questions be kept confidential.

3. Respect the privacy of other Councillors and residents.



4. Do not post information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations. See below libel and copyright guidance.

5. Residents and councillors should note that not all communications require a response, whether immediately or otherwise:

a) There may not be an immediate response to a communication as they may be discussed by the Parish Councillors and responses agreed by the Parish Council.

b) The Proper Officer (Clerk) will be responsible for all final published responses on the Parish Council website.

c) If a matter needs further consideration from the Council, it may be raised as an agenda item. Again, the poster shall be informed via the page or direct message that this is the case.

d) If a Councillor feels unable to answer a post that necessitates a response, for example one of a contentious nature, this shall be referred to the Parish Clerk. The poster will be informed by way of response that this is the case and be invited to correspond with the Parish Clerk directly.

e) Some communication from residents and other third parties may require discussion at a Parish Council meeting. When this is necessary the item will be placed on the next available agenda. Any response will then be included in the minutes of the meeting.

6. Councillors or parishioners who have any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should report them to the Clerk.

7. Use of such sites in a manner that is contrary to this policy and any other policies could result in action being taken.

Approved: August 2025

Review: Not later than August 2026