Pennington Parish Council

Social Media Policy

Revised and re-adopted at the full council meeting V4/2026

Aims:
The aim of this Policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to Pennington Parish Councillors in the use of online communications (social media).

Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet. The policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):

- Parish Council Website
- Parish Council Emails
- Facebook, Instagram and other social networking sites
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites
- Youtube and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- Bloggs and discussion forums

The principles of the Policy apply to Parish Councillors, the Clerk and it is also intended for guidance for others communicating with the Parish Council.

The use of social media is to enhance methods of interaction and should not replace existing forms of communication. The Parish Council will continue to use the website, community publications and parish notice boards as main platforms for circulating information.

Aspects of the 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. Communication posted on social media is permanent and a direct representation of the Parish Council. Councillors have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failures to comply with the law may have more serious consequences.

Guidelines
Councillors should not use their own personal social media accounts when posting or commenting on posts with regard to Parish Council business or anything that may-be construed as such. Councillors using their own social media accounts or any other form of communication for community or other purposes do so as private individuals and should not use any privileged material gained from their position as a Parish Councillor.

The Parish Clerk and/ or the appointed person/s will be responsible for establishing and administrating Parish Council social media accounts. Parish Council posts or comments on posts should only be made using the established Parish Council social media account.

Councillors wishing to utilise a Parish Council social media account should email the Parish Clerk and/ or the appointed person/s with the proposed content and posting instructions with a copy to Council members. If possible, social media posts should cross reference to the Parish Council website with the appropriate link.

Posts or comments may be initiated without prior approval for the purpose of circulating or responding with public domain information, public service notices and approved Council business or information from third parties that benefit the wider community.

The Clerk will be appointed “Webmaster” to maintain and update the Parish Council Website.

This form of social media may be used to:

- Provide information about the services of the Parish Council
- Provide legal and constitutional documents such as policies, procedures and accounting statements

- Post minutes and Agendas of meetings
- Advertise events and activities
- Advertise new information
- Advertise vacancies on the Parish Council
- Sharing information from partners such as Police, Library, Health Services
- Sharing information from Parish/ Community groups such as clubs, schools and community groups

Councillors will be provided a Council email and are personally responsible for any activity conducted via this account.

Code of Practice Guidance when using social media (including email).

- All social media sites in use should be checked and updated on a regular basis and ensure that the security settings are in place.
- The Parish Council has a professional image to uphold and conduct via social media directly impacts this image.
- Those using social media should do so responsibly, respectfully and in a direct, informative, brief and transparent manner.
- Always disclose your identity and affiliation to the Parish Council.
- Never make false or misleading statements.
- Never give out somebody's personal details such as name, telephone number, address etc
- Parish Councillors should not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment.
- All Parish Councillors should be mindful of the information they post on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council, risk bringing the Council into disrepute or is contrary to the Council's Code of Conduct or any other Policies.
- Keep the tone of comments/ posts respectful and informative, never condescending or "loud." Use sentence case format, not capital letters, or write in red to emphasis points. Spell and grammar check everything. Correct any errors promptly.
- Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks.
- Language that may be deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age or religion or belief should not be published on any social media site.
- Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications.
- Never use an individual's name unless you have written permission to do so.
- Permission to publish photographs or videos on social media sites should be sought from the subject/ organisation before being used.
- Respect the privacy of other councillors and residents.
- Do not post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations.
- Where communication may be of a sensitive nature, wherever possible, the 'comment' function should be disabled.