



ALSTON MOOR PARISH COUNCIL

Social Media Policy

Policy Statement

- Social media has a growing role in enabling improved contact and engagement between the Parish Council and the people and organisations it serves.
- This Social Media Policy explains how the Parish Council will use social media to improve the way it communicates with local residents, local businesses and the local and central government bodies it deals with.
- This policy sets out what is acceptable and not acceptable. It should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

Use of Social Media

The aim of this section of the policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to parish councillors and employees of AMPC in the use of online communications, collectively referred to as 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
- Facebook
- X (formerly known as Twitter)
- Tik Tok, Instagram or other social networking sites
- Blogs and other websites
- Online chatrooms and forums
- YouTube and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- WhatsApp and other messaging groups

The Policy applies to parish councillors and its employees. It is also intended for guidance for others communicating with the Parish Council. The policy sits alongside relevant existing policies which need to be taken into consideration. The use of social media will not replace existing forms of communication. Notice boards, Chairman's Report and newsletters will continue to be a focus for AMPC communications with residents. The website and other forms of social media will be used to enhance communication.

Social media may be used to

The aim of the Parish Council is to inform members of the community and the wider local area, through a variety of communication channels, about what is happening within the Parish and local area and share important news and information.

- Distribute agendas, post minutes and dates of meetings
- Advertise events and activities

- Good news stories linked website or press page
- Vacancies
- Re-tweet or share information from partner agencies such as Principal Authorities, Police, Library, Health , etc.
- Announcing new information
- Post or Share information from other parish related community groups such as schools, sports clubs, community groups and charities
- Refer resident queries to the clerk and all other councillors

Key Principles

- The rules which govern councillor behaviour apply equally to social media, however, the immediacy, ease and speed of dissemination amplify the need for content and comments to be carefully thought through.
- All communication is capable of misinterpretation. The immediacy and lack of face to face contact with a social media message can magnify this problem. Information and comments can be broadcast to large numbers of people very quickly.
- Although informal in style, all social media content is recorded and permanent so content must be accurate, informative and reflect policy decisions made by the Council.
- There is no requirement for a councillor to be a user of social media to communicate with the public.
- Councillors using social media should make it explicitly clear whether they are communicating in a private capacity or as a councillor.
- Councillors who have a personal social media account should make it clear in their profile details that; “all views are their own”.

Responsibilities

- The Clerk or a designated Councillor is responsible for all formal communication between the council and members of the public and will be responsible for maintaining the Parish Council Website, and Facebook pages.
- Other platforms are not currently being used for Parish communication; however, the Clerk can introduce the use of other platforms such as Instagram, Linked In, or X (formerly Twitter) subject to Council approval.
- It is understood that individual councillors may be communicating on social media and it is their responsibility to comply with the usage guidelines outlines below. The overarching rule is that councillors should not make commitments on behalf of the Council, bring the Council into disrepute and should respect confidentiality.

Code of Conduct For Councillors and Employees

Individual Parish Councillors are responsible for what they post. Councillors are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their social media accounts or through interaction with other online sites and forums.

When participating in any online communication on a council matter, councillors and employees should;

- Be responsible and respectful; be civil, relevant, direct, informative, brief and transparent.
- Always disclose your identity and affiliation to the Parish Council.
- Never make false or misleading statements.
- Not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment.
- Be mindful of the information they post on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council or bring the Council into disrepute or is contrary to the Council's Code of Conduct or any other Policies.
- Keep the tone of your comments respectful and informative. Councillors should refrain from personal criticism in social media of other councillors and individuals or organisations with whom the Parish Council has dealings (in accordance with the Nolan principles of conduct in public life)
- Language that may be deemed as offensive relating 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.
- Permission to publish photographs or videos on social media sites should be sought from the persons or organisations in the video or photograph before being uploaded.
- Respect the privacy of other councillors, employees and residents.
- Do not post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations. Posts are not to contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually orientated or offensive.

Councillors and employees should be aware that:

- Posting copyright images or text on social media sites is an offence. Breach of copyright may result in an award of damages against you.
- Publishing personal data of individuals without permission is a breach of Data Protection legislation is an offence.
- Publication of obscene material is a criminal offence and is subject to a custodial sentence.
- Councillors views posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the council at a council meeting may constitute Pre-disposition, Predetermination or Bias and will require the individual to declare an interest at council meetings
- AMPC will use all reasonable efforts to ensure that use of social media in connection with its business by councillors, employees and members of the public are within the

law. It cannot be held responsible for damages resulting from the misuse of social media in a way contrary to this policy.

Purdah

In the six-week run up to an election, local or general, councils have to be very careful not to do or say anything that could be viewed in any way to support any political party or candidate. The period is known as purdah. The council will continue to publish important service announcements using social media but will monitor and potentially have to remove responses if they are overtly party political.

How to deal with negativity and abuse online

Unfortunately, on every social media platform, there can be users who are negative and abusive. Such people are often referred to as 'trolls'. Trolls are not easy to deal with and the best way is 'not to feed them'. It is recommended that councillors do not respond to what they post, which is designed to upset, elicit a response or to further their own goals. If it's on the councillors own page or profile, delete or hide their comment, so other followers do not see it.

Councillors who wish to have a social media page the Local Government Association (LGA) has produced [digital citizenship 'rules of engagement' infographics](#) for councillors, which can be added to a councillor's personal social media profile. These set out the social media code and how you expect your followers to behave. This account **MUST** be deleted when you leave office or resign.

Monitoring

The clerk will monitor social media accounts and sites controlled by AMPC, however the diverse nature of social media means that it is nearly impossible for one person to continually monitor and review activity by councillors on social media. Councillors are therefore responsible for their own use of the media and will be held accountable where breaches are brought to the attention of AMPC. In such instances they will be considered as any other breach of the Code of Conduct for Councillors would be.

Date of policy: September 2025

Date of Council meeting:

Supersedes: Social Media Policy 2022

Policy effective from: October 2025

Date for next review: October 2027