



# **St Just in Roseland Parish Council**

## **Social Media Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

This policy sets out how St Just in Roseland Parish Council and those acting or perceived to be acting as its representatives will use social media. The aim is to promote positive engagement with the community while protecting the Council, councillors, employees, and residents from inappropriate or unlawful use of online platforms.

### **2. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Encourage effective, transparent communication with the public.
- Ensure consistency, accuracy, and professionalism in online content.
- Protect the reputation of the Parish Council and its members.
- Provide guidance on appropriate use of social media by councillors, staff, and volunteers.

### **3. Scope**

This policy applies to:

- All members of St Just in Roseland Parish Council.
- Employees, contractors, and volunteers acting on behalf of the Council.
- Any official Parish Council social media accounts (e.g., Facebook, X/Twitter, Instagram, Nextdoor, Threads, etc).

It also provides guidance for councillors' personal use of social media where it may impact the Council's reputation or operations.

### **4. Definition of Social Media**

For the purposes of this policy, social media includes any online platform that allows people to create, share, or exchange content and information. Examples include:

- Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, Threads, Nextdoor, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube.
- Blogs, forums, or community websites.
- Messaging apps (e.g. WhatsApp, Messenger) when used for Council-related business.

### **5. Official Parish Council Accounts**

- The Clerk (or Parish Administrator) will be responsible for maintaining and monitoring official Council social media accounts.
- Content will focus on sharing Council news, meeting information, events, public consultations, and community updates.
- Posts should be factual, polite, and politically neutral.
- Comments that are abusive, offensive, defamatory, or irrelevant may be removed at the Clerk's discretion.

### **6. Use by Councillors and Staff**

Councillors and staff should:

- Remember they are representatives of the Council; their behaviour online should reflect this.
- Avoid posting or sharing content that could damage the Council's reputation.

- Never disclose confidential information or personal data.
- Be mindful of their obligations under the **Code of Conduct**.
- Avoid engaging in arguments or negative exchanges online.

Councillors may express political opinions but must make it clear when doing so that they are speaking in a **personal capacity**, not on behalf of the Council.

## **7. Responding to Comments and Messages**

- The Council will acknowledge questions and comments within a reasonable timeframe.
- Complex issues or complaints should be directed to the proper channels (e.g., via email to the Clerk).
- No individual councillor should respond directly on behalf of the Council unless authorised.

## **8. Respect and Moderation**

- Users must not post defamatory, offensive, or discriminatory comments.
- The Council reserves the right to remove, hide, or report comments that breach this standard.
- Persistent or abusive behaviour by users may result in blocking or reporting.

## **9. Legal Considerations**

All users must comply with relevant legislation, including:

- Data Protection Act 2018 (GDPR)
- Defamation Act 2013
- Equality Act 2010
- Copyright, libel, and privacy laws
- Local Government (Transparency and Public Access to Information) Regulations

## **10. Breaches of Policy**

- Breaches by councillors may result in action under the Code of Conduct.
- Breached by staff may result in action under the Council's disciplinary procedures.
- Serious breaches may be referred to the Monitoring Officer or relevant authorities.

## **11. Review**

This policy will be reviewed every **three years** or sooner if required by changes in legislation or guidance.

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**Adopted by St Just in Roseland Parish Council**

Date: 03/11/25

Next Review Date: November 2028