



ROWDE PARISH COUNCIL

Social Media Policy



ADOPTED: 10.06.2026 TO BE REVIEWED: May 2027

1. Introduction, Purpose, and Scope

1.1 Objective

This policy establishes a formal regulatory framework for the professional, transparent, and safe use of social media by Rowde Parish Council. Its objective is to ensure that all digital communications facilitate transparency while safeguarding the Council's reputation, legal standing, and the safety of its representatives and the public.

1.2 Scope

This policy is mandatory for all Parish Councillors, the Clerk, volunteers, and any contractors or agency staff representing the Council. It shall be read in conjunction with the *Rowde Parish Council IT Policy*, the *Dignity at Work Policy*, and the *Complaints Policy*.

1.3 Policy Review

In accordance with the review schedule of the *Complaints Policy* and *IT Policy*, this document shall be reviewed annually during the month of May to ensure continued compliance with emerging technological standards and legislative requirements.

2. General Principles of Conduct

2.1 Mandated Civility and Respect

In accordance with the Council's commitment to the Civility Pledge and the *Dignity at Work Policy*, all representatives of the Council shall adhere to the following standards of conduct in social media interactions:

- Representatives **shall** be polite and courteous in all digital communications.
- The Council maintains a "zero tolerance" policy regarding bullying or harassment.
- All interactions **must** demonstrate consideration for the feelings and perspectives of others, upholding the written standards of the Councillor Code of Conduct.

2.2 Prohibited Content

Representatives of the Council are strictly prohibited from posting or sharing content that meets the criteria for bullying and harassment as defined in the *Dignity at Work Policy*. Forbidden behaviours include:

- Spreading malicious rumours or making demeaning or insulting comments.
- Making devaluing comments regarding an individual's appearance or efforts.
- Posting or sharing content related to protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- The use of obscene gestures, lewd comments, or suggestive gestures in any visual media.

2.3 Professional Tone and Standards

All communication via social media **must** be professional and respectful. Pursuant to Section 7 of the *IT Policy*, all digital communications reflect the Council's authority; users **shall** avoid accessing or sharing any content that is inappropriate, offensive, or otherwise brings the Council into disrepute.

3. Social Media Usage at Council Meetings

3.1 Real-Time Updates and Order

While social media may be utilised for "live" updates, such activity **shall not** interfere with the orderly conduct of Council business. Usage **must** strictly adhere to the framework for meeting conduct established in the *Model Standing Orders 2025*, specifically Standing Order 1 (Rules of Debate) and Standing Order 2 (Disorderly Conduct).

3.2 Consent and Recording

As stipulated in the *Complaints Policy (Appendix 1)*, the electronic recording or live-streaming of meetings, telephone calls, or conversations without the prior knowledge and express consent of the Council and all involved parties is strictly forbidden. The Council explicitly categorises the unauthorised electronic recording of meetings or conversations as a behaviour characteristic of a persistent or vexatious complainant.

4. Personal vs. Official Account Usage

4.1 Usage Boundaries

Pursuant to Section 3 of the *IT Policy*, Rowde Parish Council IT resources and official email accounts are for official activities only. Official social media accounts shall be managed exclusively by authorised personnel for Council-related tasks.

4.2 Mandatory Guidelines for Councillors

- **Authorisation:** Councillors **shall not** use personal social media accounts to represent the official position of the Council unless specifically authorised to do so.
- **Disclaimers:** If a Councillor is identifiable as such on a personal account, they **shall** include a prominent disclaimer stating that the views expressed are their own and do not necessarily represent Rowde Parish Council.
- **Conflict of Interest:** In accordance with Item 9 of the *Financial Risk Assessment*, Councillors are strictly prohibited from using social media in a manner that creates a conflict of interest or fails to declare a prejudicial interest. All social media activity **must** align with the *Register of Members Interests*.

4.3 Mandatory Security Requirements

Any device used to access Council-related social media **must** adhere to the security standards set out in the *IT Policy (Sections 8 & 9)*:

- **Authentication:** Mobile devices **must** be secured using a passcode and/or biometric authentication.
- **Credentials:** Accounts **must** utilise strong, unique passwords that **shall not** be shared with any unauthorised third party.

5. Privacy and Data Protection (GDPR)

5.1 Legal Compliance

All social media activity **must** comply with the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The Council reserves the right to monitor communications to ensure legal compliance, as noted in Section 10 of the *IT Policy*.

5.2 Confidentiality of Information

Representatives **shall not** disclose personal data, confidential information, or sensitive Council data on social media. This mandate is consistent with the *Freedom of Information Policy*, which protects information provided in confidence or of commercial interest.

5.3 Visual Data and Consent

Before posting images or videos of residents or children, a signed *GDPR Consent Form* **must** be obtained. The form **must** have the following tick-box options explicitly authorised:

- "Communications appearing in electronic form (including social media)."
- "Use of name and photo in newsletters, bulletins or on the website."

6. Dealing with Abuse and Enforcement

6.1 Habitual and Vexatious Interactions

The Council reserves the right to restrict contact if social media interactions become "habitual or vexatious" as defined in Section 1 of the *Complaints Policy*. This includes persistence that adversely affects the Council's ability to provide services or comments intended to cause disruption rather than resolve a genuine grievance.

6.2 Enforcement Actions

User Type	Consequence of Breach
Employees / Clerk	Disciplinary action under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure (<i>Dignity at Work Policy</i>).
Councillors	Referral to the Monitoring Officer at Wiltshire Council for potential breach of the Code of Conduct.
Public / Vexatious Complainants	Restriction of contact and potential inclusion on the "Restricted Contact Awareness Register."

6.3 Procedure for Restricted Contact

The placement of an individual on the *Restricted Contact Awareness Register* **must** be authorised by the appointed Council member. The authorised entry **shall** be filed with the Parish Clerk using the formal template provided in Appendix 2 of the *Complaints Policy*.

6.4 Reporting Breaches

Any suspected security breaches, incidents of harassment, or victimisation occurring via social media **must** be reported immediately to the Parish Clerk for investigation and resolution, in accordance with Section 12 of the *IT Policy*.