Social Media Policy for Salhouse Parish Council

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The aim of this policy is to outline the terms agreed by Salhouse Parish Council on their representation online, specifically on communication channels referred to as social media.

The inception of a digital age has changed the expectations of the public and their engagement with organisations. The community wishes to be able to communicate with Council online and there is a recognised need for Council to be represented on social media sites.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

The policy will cover activity including (but not restricted to):

- Salhouse Parish Council owned and run websites
- Salhouse Parish Council email addresses
- Facebook

Breach of this policy by Councillors may be dealt with under the Code of Conduct. Breaches of this policy by employees may be dealt with by the Council's disciplinary procedures and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.

Nothing in this policy shall be deemed to prevent any employee, volunteer, or member of the Parish Council from acting in a personal capacity on social media on any matter unrelated to Parish Council activity.

Any employee, volunteer or member of the Parish Council shall be permitted to participate in any online communications relating to Parish Council activity so long as it is made clear that any posts are made in a private capacity as an individual and posted via a personal account.

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The Council will use social media for the following activities:

- To raise awareness of incidents or planned works that may affect the village or surrounding area
- Promotion of Council activities including meetings, consultations and projects
- Promotion of Salhouse Community events
- Responding to comments made by members of the public where appropriate

Salhouse Parish Council hereby agrees that:

- All official communications from the Council will be moderated and published by either the Parish Clerk, the Chairman of the Council, or a duly appointed member of the Council.
Any responses published will be copied to the Clerk.
- Representation on behalf of the Council may only come from an official Parish Council account, and not from an individual's personal account.
- All published correspondence will follow Council's agreed Equal Opportunities policy.
- Personal information will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018.
- No political bias will be demonstrated.
- No personal opinions will be expressed via Council accounts.
- Copyright and libel laws will always be upheld.
- Social media channels will be updated as soon as is reasonably possible.

• The right is reserved to edit and/or delete any correspondence purporting to Council which is deemed to be offensive, inappropriate, factually incorrect or in any other way derogatory.
• No photographs or videos will be uploaded without the express permission of any person/s featured.

All employees, volunteers and members are expected to comply with this policy in all their work on behalf of the Parish Council to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of our Council.

Rules for the use of social media are attached at Appendix 1.

The Parish Council's website and Facebook page are not monitored 24/7, and the Council will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. **Any such requests that require a response from the Council should therefore be emailed directly to the Council via the Clerk's published email address.**

Salhouse Parish Council reserves the right to monitor and administer content or comments posted on the Council's website or Facebook page by third parties and, at its sole discretion, to remove any content posted thereon. This right is unqualified and will not be subject to explanation on a case-by-case basis. As a guide, comments or content that include any of the following are likely to be removed:

• any instances of obscenity, vulgarity, or abusive language
• personal attacks, insults, bullying, or threatening language
• deliberate attempts to create upset, arguments, discord or conflict (trolling)
• harassment, discrimination or 'hate speech'
• knowingly false or potentially false, libellous or defamatory statements
• any material that violates copyrights, trademark rights, or other intellectual property rights of third parties
• private, personal information published without consent
• unauthorised disclosure of proprietary or confidential information
• information or links unrelated to the content of the discussion
• commercial promotions, advertisements or spam
• information which is false or is likely to mislead readers
• any material in violation of any laws or which alleges a breach of policy or laws
• information behaviour and/or posts deemed to be vexatious (causing or tending to cause annoyance, frustration, or worry) will be removed and may lead to the individual being withdrawn from the page.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Parish Council will establish appropriate and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of the social media policy. The effectiveness of the social media policy will be reviewed annually, and remedial action taken as necessary.

Where a matter is raised on social media which requires fuller investigation or response by the Council, this will be raised at the next meeting and will be invited to engage with the Council to inform that discussion.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

The Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.

The Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to our work. All employees, volunteers and members should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it.

Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Parish Clerk.

COMPLAINTS A complaint raised on social media will not be considered a formal complaint, however the complainant will be invited to formally complain through the official channels and a link to the Council's Complaints Procedure will be associated with the complainant's comment on social media, where possible.

Reviewed: 14th September 2026 Next Review: September 2029

Appendix 1

Rules for use of social media

Whenever you are permitted to use social media in accordance with this policy, you must adhere to the following general rules:

1.1. Do not upload, post, or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.

1.2. Any employee, volunteer or member who feels that they have been harassed or bullied or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform the Parish Clerk or the Chairman of the Council.

1.3. Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal, private, or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with the Parish Clerk or the Chairman of the Council.

1.4. Do not upload, post, or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.

1.5. Before you include a link to a third-party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit you to link to it.

1.6. When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.

1.7. Be honest and open but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people’s perceptions of the Council.

1.8. You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools.

1.9. Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.

1.10. Don’t discuss employees without their prior approval.

1.11. Always consider others’ privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion.

1.12. Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them and never publish anyone else's contact details.