



KIPPAX PARISH COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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Signed by Chairman, Councillor Martin Eyre

Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Account	an arrangement by which a user is given personalised access to a computer, website, or application, typically by entering a username and password.
Blog	a website where someone regularly records their thoughts or experiences or talks about a subject.
Podcast	a digital audio file made available on the internet for downloading to a computer or mobile device, typically available as a series.
Content	anything you share on social media, whether it's a text update, a photo, graphic, video, link.
Comment	a form of engagement in which a user replies to your social media post.
Device	a unit of physical hardware or equipment that provides one or more computing functions within a computer system
Friend	A third party who has access to another users feed and content on Facebook
Feed	the constantly updating list of stories in the middle of your home page.
Follow	allows a third party to see a public updates of another user in their Feed

Media	all channels of communication, including everything from printed paper to digital data.
Post	a piece of writing, image, or other item of content published online, typically on a blog or on social media.
Publish	prepare and issue for public distribution
Social media	the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks
Social Networking	the use of dedicated websites and applications to interact with other users, or to find people with similar interests to one's own.
Social Networking Sites	an area on the internet where a number of users can communicate in real time

Rationale

Kippax Parish Council (KPC) recognises that the internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information on particular topics using a wide variety of social media. However, councillors' use of social media can pose risks to the safeguarding of confidential information, reputation, and can jeopardise compliance with legal obligations. To minimise these risks and to ensure that I.T. resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate purposes, councillors and employees of KPC are expected to adhere to this policy. This policy should be read alongside KPC Media Policy and KPC I.T. Policy.

Scope and purpose of the policy

This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, social networking sites, blogs, podcasts and any other internet postings. This includes but is not limited to websites, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter) or any other account that is used for social media purposes by KPC members. The policy applies regardless of where the social media is accessed.

Personnel responsible for implementing the policy

The Full Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy, for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks.

All councillors have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that all councillors understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements. All councillors are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media should be reported to the Full Council via the clerk immediately upon discovery. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Full Council via the clerk.

Kippax Parish Council Social Media Management

1. KPC Facebook, Website and Instagram account will be created and managed solely by KPC.

2. The Clerk and Councillors who have been approved by Full Council will be responsible for administering the website, Facebook page and Facebook Messenger. Approved administrators will be required to undertake relevant training before taking up the role.
3. The accounts will be set up using the clerk@kippax-pc.gov.uk email address.
4. Only information relevant to Kippax and KPC will be posted. (Refer to section on creating content for more information).
5. The accounts will only link to pages of a local government organisation or organisations/causes relating to the village.
6. No extreme religious or extreme political views will be expressed.
7. "Friends" will not be allowed to post new topics to the Facebook "wall". However, friends will be able to comment on wall topics created by KPC.
8. Posts on the Facebook page will be available for all users of Facebook to see.
9. KPC's logo will be the profile picture for everyone to see.
10. Photo Albums will be open for everyone to view.
11. Content will not have a direct view of any child's face without the prior consent of their guardian.
12. The accounts will be maintained by the Clerk and approved councillors (administrators) who will remove messages which include: Abusive language or content which may cause offence to a specific group of people e.g. comments on a person's sexuality, sexist comments, racial comments etc. Which contain potentially libellous comments. Any other comment which may cause offence in any way.
13. KPC reserves the right to ban Facebook users from the KPC page if they repeatedly make comments such as those cited in point 12 above. KPC administrators will inform the Clerk of any such comments and the decision to ban, and the duration of the ban will be included on the agenda for consideration at the next Full Council meeting.
14. If any matters raised are relevant and need to be discussed by KPC then further information will be sought and brought to the relevant committee/ full council
15. Event dates will be created for any KPC or village event taking place. Other events taking place in the village may be promoted.
16. People will be encouraged to be "friends" of and "follow" the KPC Facebook page and Instagram account.
If "friends" or "followers" are repeatedly abusing the social media accounts then they will be removed from the friends/followers list and unable to post to the accounts. Instances which would involve removal include repeated: Posting with abusive language content; Posting comments which may cause offence to a specific group of people e.g. comments of a person's sexuality, sexist comments, racial comments etc.; Posting potential libellous comments.
17. The accounts will not be used for playing games, adding applications, or anything of a personal nature.
18. KPC administrators will send replies to anyone sending an initial private message via Facebook Messenger. If a "simple" response is not possible, then the following response will be given,
Kippax Parish Council welcomes your feedback and questions. Please email Debi Muir, the Clerk to Kippax Parish Council clerk@kippax-pc.gov.uk who will investigate your enquiry and respond in due course.
19. KPC administrators will not respond to messages with their personal views. (For more information refer to section ***Protecting KPC's Reputation*** on p.4 of this policy.)
20. Any posts by "friends"/ followers" raising issues/questions/comments that cannot be answered "simply" will be dealt with separately via email. The Clerk's email address will be provided.

Kippax Parish Council Social Media Content

The administrators will post the following content:

- publicity for KPC upcoming events and services which has been approved by the relevant committee/full council.
- updates on KPC projects / resolved issues approved by the relevant committee/full council.
- to advertise councillor vacancies as they arise, and volunteer positions approved by the relevant committee/full council.
- to celebrate successes and milestones reached by KPC approved by the relevant committee/full council.
- to promote / advertise village activities that directly benefit KPC residents and which are organised by local groups as requested.
- to share training opportunities that will directly benefit the residents of Kippax as requested.
- to provide alerts and general information that may directly affect the residents of Kippax as requested.

In addition, information will be posted on the Parish Council website in line with the Council Publication Scheme.

KPC use of social media

If a councillor's duties require them to speak on behalf of KPC in a social media environment, they must ensure that their profile and any content they post is consistent with the professional image they present to the public and the wider community. If a councillor is contacted for comments about KPC for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, they should direct the inquiry to the clerk in line with the KPC Media Policy.

“The Councillor Code of Conduct and relevant legislation applies online and in social media. If you are referring online in any way to your role as a councillor, you are deemed to be acting in your ‘official capacity’ and any conduct may fall within the code. “

(Guide to the role of councillors use of social media)

Please refer to Appendix 1 for further guidance on the role of Parish Councillors on social media. The use of social media for KPC purposes is subject to the remainder of this policy.

Responsible use of social media

The following sections of the policy provide councillors with common-sense guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely. Councillors should be aware that any comments made via the use of social media are subject to exactly the same legal rules as any other written comments. As such both councillors and KPC may be at risk of legal proceedings if the comments breach the legal rules, in particular those relating to any breach of confidentiality or any disparaging or defamatory statements etc.

Protecting KPC's reputation

Councillors and / or employees of KPC should avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage KPC's reputation, even indirectly. Councillors must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about: KPC its members or employees; members of the public; other affiliates and stakeholders.

Councillors and/or employees should make it clear in personal social media postings that they are speaking on their own behalf. All posts and comments made must be factual and in line with KPC policies.

Councillors and/or employees are personally responsible for what they communicate in social media. Remember that what is published might be available to be read by the masses (including KPC itself, future councillors and social acquaintances) for a long time. Keep this in mind before posting content.

Councillors and/or employees must not post comments about sensitive council topics, such as KPCs performance. Even if they make it clear that their views on such topics do not represent those of KPC, their comments could still damage KPC's reputation.

If there is any uncertainty or concern about the appropriateness of any statement, post or comment on social media, councillors and/or employees should refrain from making the communication and refer it to full council or the relevant committee for approval. If councillors see content on social media that disparages or reflects poorly on KPC or their stakeholders, they should refer it to the full council for consideration. **All councillors are responsible for protecting KPC's reputation.**

Respecting confidential information

Councillors and/or employees of KPC should not do anything to jeopardise confidential information through the use of social media and should ensure compliance with GDPR regulations.

Respecting councillors, employees, partners and members of the public.

Do not post anything that fellow councillors or partners would find offensive, including discriminatory comments, insults or obscenity. Do not post anything related to fellow councillors without their written permission.

Monitoring and review of this policy

The Full Council shall be responsible for reviewing this policy to ensure that it meets requirements and reflects best practice. Councillors are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting the clerk via clerk@kippax-pc.gov.uk.

Compliance

Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any other KPC policies. If an Internet post would breach any of KPC policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum.

If a Councillor's conduct on social media is considered to be in breach of the code of conduct this should be reported to the monitoring officer at Leeds City Council (LCC) as per the KPC Complaints Policy. Where an employee of KPC is suspected of breaching this policy, it will be dealt with in accordance with the KPC Disciplinary Policy.

If an administrator is suspected of breaching the policy on the management of KPC's social media, the matter be reported to full council for consideration.

Appendix 1: [Guide to the role of councillors on social media](#)

Engaging in healthy debate and tackling misinformation

People in the public eye, including councillors, play an important role within the community, and are regarded as influential in their local area. This is just as true online and on social media as it would be in person or in traditional media. The actions, tone, manner, and language that a councillor uses online has a wide impact – not just personally, but for many others online.

Abide by the golden rule

Follow the golden rule – do as you would be done by. It is never pleasant to be on the receiving end of negative posts or abusive comments. As a councillor, you need to rise above such behaviour, make sure the way you respond to others is polite and positive, and encourage healthy debate on your own social media accounts and those of others.

Encouraging positive, polite and constructive debate

There is a range of ways to encourage positive behaviour online by others. Your first step should be to add the [LGA Digital citizenship 'rules of engagement' infographics](#) to your accounts. These are downloadable infographics which are easy to add to your profile to make it clear to other social media users that you intend to use your account in a positive and constructive manner.

When you post to your own accounts, make sure you frame your requests for engagement from other users in a positive way. Ask people to keep their posts positive and polite, reminding them that this is possible even if they disagree with other people's views.

Finally, you can make sure that the way you respond to what other people share is also polite and positive, even if you disagree with it or if it is from your political opponents.

Remember – your behaviour influences others

Your behaviour as a councillor on social media will influence others. If members of the public see comments a councillor has made which are not constructive or are negative, it is more likely to make them think that it's ok for them to use poor behaviour online as well. This doesn't mean you can't disagree with what people say, but the tone in which you do so is important.

Remember – it is not defensible to complain that you are on the receiving end of negativity or abuse, if comments you've made yourself are not polite.

Use your voice to tackle misinformation and inaccuracy

If you see information being shared that is inaccurate or false, say so. You can comment on the post saying that it isn't true. You could follow this up with a private or direct message to the person sharing the information telling them it's false and asking them to remove the post.

It is also very important for councillors to verify the accuracy of what they are posting or sharing themselves. It is easy to quickly share content from elsewhere without checking only to find, later, that it is inaccurate.

You can report posts to social media companies, flagging them as being not true. Where relevant, you can report posts to council authorities, for example, to your council's media team if you feel there might be need for rebuttal, or to your council's monitoring officer.

Consider the Code of Conduct while being active on social media

Councillors need to be aware that they are personally responsible for the content they publish on any form of social media. Publishing an untrue statement about a person which is damaging to their reputation may incur a defamation action for which you will be personally liable. The same applies if you pass on any similar untrue statements you receive.

Is information already in the public domain?

Also consider if information you are considering sharing is already in the public domain or not. If it isn't, is it information that is sensitive financially or politically? Think about what the ramifications might be for you personally if you share information on social media that has, up to that point, been confidential.

Be aware of what you share

Social media sites are in the public domain and it is important to ensure you are confident of the nature of the information you publish. Once published, content is almost impossible to control and may be manipulated without your consent, used in different contexts, or further distributed.

It's highly recommended that councillors should never post or share anything online or on social media that they would not be comfortable saying or sharing in a public meeting.

Using a Facebook Page for your councillor activity on Facebook and a profile for your personal postings does allow separation. If you want to keep your social media activity private, you can set very strict privacy settings on your accounts. Most social media platforms do have the ability to do this, but they have different actions to do this, so make sure you have got it set right.

Overall, though, it is extremely important to remember that there is still a risk that posts or activity on your personal profile will be seen and shared publicly – no matter how strict your privacy settings are. Saying it is private is no defence.

REFERENCES

Guide to the role of councillors on social media (<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/leadership-workforce-and-communications/comms-hub-communications-support/social-media-1>)