

THWING AND OCTON PARISH COUNCIL – SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. Engaging with the council on social media

1.2 The council encourages members of the public, local organisations and community groups, members of the press, local councillors and others in our wider community to follow and engage with the council through social media accounts.

1.3 We also encourage everyone in our community to share content from our corporate social media accounts with their own social media networks. This is especially important, for example, during emergency situations or where sharing timely information is essential.

1.4 Individuals and organisations are responsible for the content that they choose to post to their social media accounts. This includes content created by others that individuals or organisations choose to repost, retweet or share.

1.5 The council will ensure that its social media accounts are regularly updated to reflect current information and provide accurate, relevant content to the public.

1.6 The council encourages transparency in communication and may provide responses to public queries or comments where appropriate. However, replies are not guaranteed for every comment or inquiry due to resource limitations.

1.7 The council's social media accounts are not for personal grievances. We recommend that individuals with specific concerns or complaints contact the council via formal channels (e.g., email, phone) to ensure proper handling and response.

2. Conduct on social media

2.1 The Council will treat everyone with courtesy and respect on its social media channels, and we therefore ask for the same in return from those who choose to engage with us.

2.2 We ask that council staff and councillors are treated courteously. Council staff and councillors should never be subjected to bullying or other forms of abuse or harassment.

2.3 Council staff and councillors have the right to carry out their civic duties and work without fear of being attacked or abused. Any behaviour whether that be verbal, physical or in writing, which causes either councillors or council staff to feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or threatened, is unacceptable.

2.4 The council encourages healthy debate and discussion. However, posts that are discriminatory, defamatory, or that incite violence, hatred, or illegal activity will be removed immediately.

2.5 The council's social media accounts should not be used for promoting personal businesses or services unrelated to the council's activities. Any such content will be removed.

2.6 When sharing content from third-party sources, the council will always provide proper credit to the original content creator and ensure that it aligns with our values and policy.

3. Reporting a civility and respect-related issue

3.1 Council staff and others operating the Council's social media accounts will at all times be mindful of the council's relevant policies, procedures and processes, including the Code of Conduct.

3.2 The council will record and report abuse directed at the Council. The Council may, for example, create screenshots of comments and keep a record of abusive or threatening communications, and may take further action as appropriate.

3.3 Council staff and councillors should not have to put up with abusive or threatening behaviour. When subjected to such behaviour. The council reserves the right to enact its relevant social media policies and may, for example, delete content, block individuals or report individuals to social media platforms when appropriate to do so.

3.4 The Council may need to report issues of poor conduct directly to social media platforms. For instance, if someone has created a 'fake account' or if someone is persistently abusive to the Council.

3.5 The Council reserves the right to report criminal matters it notices on social media to the Police. For instance, hate crime/speech or threats of violence.

3.6 Please get in touch with the Council if you feel that a councillor, member of staff or a user of our social media has failed to act in a civil and respectful way on our social media.

3.7 The Council will review reports of inappropriate behaviour within a reasonable timeframe and will take action when deemed necessary, including but not limited to blocking, reporting to social media platforms, or referring matters to law enforcement.

3.8 In the event of a pattern of ongoing harassment or disruptive behaviour from a user, the council may consider suspending or permanently blocking that user from engaging with its social media accounts.

3.9 Any reports of abuse or harassment should ideally include screenshots or other supporting evidence where possible to assist with a thorough review.

4. Privacy and Data Protection

4.1 The council is committed to protecting users' privacy. Any personal data shared through social media will be handled in accordance with the council's data protection policies.

4.2 We advise against sharing sensitive personal information through social media channels. If a personal matter requires attention, please contact the council directly through more secure channels.

5. Moderation and Community Guidelines

5.1 The council's social media platforms will be moderated by designated staff to ensure compliance with these guidelines. Posts or comments that do not adhere to the following community guidelines may be removed without notice.

5.2 Our community guidelines include, but are not limited to:

- No hate speech or discrimination.
- No spam or irrelevant links.
- No abusive or threatening language.
- Respect for all users and their viewpoints.

Date of policy: 29.01.2025

Approving committee: Thwing & Octon Parish Council