



Media and Social Media Policy

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Appendix added with Supplements

Media and Social Media Policy

Social Media

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This is intended to help employees, volunteers and councillors make appropriate decisions about the use of social media, and to outline Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council's position on various aspects of its use, including the management of comments made by members of the public when using Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council's social media sites.
- 1.2 It outlines the standards we require employees; councillors; committee/working group/task and finish group/sub-committee members (referred to as group members) ; and volunteers to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which we may monitor your use of social media, and the action we will take in respect of breaches of this policy
- 1.3 This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):
 - Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council website
 - Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and other social networking sites
 - X, Threads, and other micro-blogging sites
 - Youtube and other video clip and podcast sites
 - Blogs and discussion forums
 - Email
- 1.4 This policy supplements, and should be read in conjunction with, all other policies and procedures adopted by Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council. The current Code of Conduct applies to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 All employees, volunteers, group members, and councillors are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of our council, its services, employees, partners and community.
- 2.2 Breach of this policy by employees, councillors or volunteers may be dealt with under our Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal. For councillors, breaches may also be subject to investigation under the Code of Conduct.
- 2.3 Breach of this policy by volunteers may result in the council no longer using their services and, if necessary, appropriate action will be taken.
- 2.4 Councillors in their conduct will be guided by, and adhere to, the Code of Conduct.

3.0 Responsibility for Implementation of the Policy

- 3.1 The council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
- 3.2 The clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to our work.
- 3.3 All employees, volunteers and councillors should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the clerk (or the chairman of the council if the matter refers to the clerk).

- 3.4 Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the clerk in writing.

4.0 Using Social Media Sites in our Name

- 4.1 The clerk, assistant clerk and a designated communications lead councillor are authorised to post on social media and on the Council's website. They may delegate permissions to relevant officers as necessary.

5.0 Third Party Social Media and Individual Councillor Usage

- 5.1 Individual Parish Councillors and council staff are responsible for what they post, both in a council and personal capacity.
- 5.2 The behaviour required in the Councillor's Code of Conduct shall apply to online activity in the same way it applies to other written or verbal communication. Councillors will bear in mind that inappropriate conduct can still attract adverse publicity, even where the code does not apply.
- 5.3 Councillors should be aware that their profile as a Councillor means it is more likely that they will be seen as acting in an official capacity, regardless of their intent.
- 5.4 If using social media in your official capacity as a councillor, you should always be mindful of the Code of Conduct, and of the seven Nolan principles applicable to holding public office: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.

6.0 Rules for Use of Social Media

- 6.1 When using social media, Councillors and staff must be mindful of the information they post in both a personal and council capacity, and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative.
- 6.2 Councillors and staff should not post comments that they would not be prepared to make in writing or face-to-face.
- 6.3 When participating in online communication, Councillors and staff must:
- a) Be responsible and respectful, ensuring that posts are positive, informative and balanced
 - b) Respect the privacy of other councillors, staff and residents
 - c) Keep the tone of comments respectful and informative, never condescending or 'loud' i.e. use sentence case format, and not write in capital letters or red to emphasise points
 - d) Seek permission to publish original photos or videos (posting copyright images or text on social media sites is an offence, so councillors and staff must ensure they have the appropriate rights to use any third-party content, including images, videos, or text, before posting)
 - e) Always disclose their identity and affiliation to the council when taking part in discussions where their affiliation is relevant, and never hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms
- 6.4 When participating in online communication, Councillors and staff must not:
- a) Give out the personal details of others, including home addresses and telephone numbers

b) Use an individual's name in social media communications or post information about an individual unless given written permission to do so (publishing personal data of individuals without permission is a breach of Data Protection legislation).

c) Present personal opinions as that of Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council. If a councillor or member of staff communicates online personally, and not in their role as a councillor, volunteer, or member of council staff, they must not claim to act or give the impression that they are acting as a representative of the council. This could include:

- i) Sharing web links to official council websites
- ii) Use of council logos
- iii) Use of council email addresses
- iv) Sharing any other council identification

d) Present themselves in a way that may cause embarrassment to the council, or bring the council into disrepute

e) Make false or misleading statements

f) Post personal or political content, content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the council, or post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks.

g) Make derogatory, defamatory, discriminatory or offensive comments about any person including council staff, councillors and the council, or about the people, businesses and agencies the council works with and serves, or post any online activity that constitutes bullying or harassment.

h) Engage in personal attacks, online fights, hostile communications or in any way allow interaction on social media to damage their working relationships with others

i) Publish photographs or videos of minors or members of the public without their permission

k) Post any information that may be deemed libel

l) Post obscene material

m) Conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence

n) Bring the council into disrepute, including through content posted in a personal capacity

o) Share information that you have only accessed through your role as councillor or employee

p) Disclose confidential or commercially sensitive information

6.5 Councillors views posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the council or at a committee meeting may constitute pre-disposition, predetermination or bias, and may require the individual to declare an interest at council meetings.

6.6 Anyone with concerns regarding content placed on social media sites that denigrate Parish Councillors, council staff or residents should report them to the Parish Clerk.

7.0 Monitoring Use of Social Media Websites

7.1 Employees should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for council purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken against employees under our Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure. Monitoring will be conducted in compliance with data protection regulations and privacy laws.

- 7.2 Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and us. In particular, a serious case of uploading, posting, forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will probably amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):
- a) Pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films, and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature)
 - b) A false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation
 - c) Material which is offensive or obscene
 - d) Criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the council, councillors, or our employees
 - e) Confidential information about the council or anyone else
 - f) Any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for you or the council)
 - g) Material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person
- 7.3 Any such action will be addressed under the Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure and for employees may result in summary dismissal.
- 7.4 Where evidence of misuse is found we may undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with our Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure, involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or managers involved in the investigation. If necessary, such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.
- 7.5 If social media use by councillors, employees, volunteers, or group members is in breach of this policy please report it to the clerk (or the chairman, if the matter refers to the clerk).
- 8.0 Review**
- 8.1 A review of the policy shall be undertaken bi-annually (or as appropriate) and necessary amendments will be undertaken by the clerk and reported to the full council for approval. The clerk will ensure a record of any amendments is maintained within the Version Control section.

Media

9.0 Introduction

- 9.1 Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council (“the council”) is committed to the provision of accurate information about its governance, decisions, and activities. Where this information is not available via the council’s publication scheme, please contact the clerk or assistant clerk.
- 9.2 The council shall, where possible, co-operate with those whose work involves gathering material for publication in any form including use of the internet (“the media”).
- 9.3 This policy explains how the council may work with the media to meet the above objectives in accordance with the legal requirements and restrictions that apply.

10.0 Legal Requirements and Restrictions

- 10.1 This policy is subject to the council’s obligations which are set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1986, the Local Government Act 1988, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, other legislation which may apply and the council’s Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The council must also have regard to the government’s Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publication.
- 10.2 The council cannot disclose confidential information or disclosure information which is prohibited by law. The council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the council’s Standing Orders, under contract or by common law. Councillors are subject to additional restrictions about the disclosure of confidential information which arise from the Code of Conduct adopted by the council, a copy of which is available via the council’s publication scheme.

11.0 Meetings

- 11.1 Meetings of the council and its committees are open to the public unless the meeting resolves to exclude them because their presence at the meeting is prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business or other special reason(s) stated in the resolution. In accordance with the council’s Standing Orders, persons may be required to leave a meeting of the council and its committees, if their disorderly behaviour obstructs the business of the meeting.
- 11.2 Where a meeting of the council and its committees include an opportunity for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the council’s Standing Orders.
- 11.3 The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a meeting of the council and its committees (which includes e.g. using a mobile phone or tablet, recording for a TV/radio broadcast, providing commentary on blogs, web forums, or social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) which enable a person not at the meeting to see, hear or be given commentary about the meeting is permitted unless (i) the meeting has resolved to hold all or part of the meeting without the public present or (ii) such activities disrupt the proceedings or (iii) paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5 below apply.
- 11.4 The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a child or vulnerable adult at a council or committee meeting is not permitted unless an adult responsible for them has given permission.
- 11.5 Oral reporting or commentary about a council or committee meeting by a person who is present at the meeting is not permitted.

11.6 The council shall, as far as it is practicable, provide reasonable facilities for anyone taking a report of a Council or committee meeting and for telephoning their report at their own expense.

11.7 The council's Standing Orders will confirm if attendance by the public, their participation, photographing, recording, filming, or other reporting is permitted at a meeting of a sub-committee.

12.0 Other communications with the media

12.1 This Media policy does not seek to regulate councillors in their private capacity.

12.2 The council's communications with the media seek to represent the corporate position and views of the council. If the views of councillors are different to the council's corporate position and views, they must make this clear. Media statements must align with council-approved policies and decisions.

12.3 The council's clerk, or assistant clerk may contact the media if the council wants to provide information, a statement or other material about the council.

12.4 The chairman of the council is permitted to speak to the media to provide information, a statement or other material about the council. Other councillors may speak on behalf of the council if the chairman delegates the matter to a councillor.

12.5 Subject to the obligations on councillors not to disclose information referred to in paragraph 2.2 above and not to misrepresent the council's position, councillors are free to communicate their position and views.

12.6 Councillors in their conduct will be guided by, and adhere to, the Code of Conduct.

13.0 Press Releases

13.1 The purpose of a press release is to make the media aware of a potential story, to provide important public information or to explain the council's position on a particular issue. It is the responsibility of the clerk and councillors to look for opportunities where the issuing of a press release may be beneficial.

13.2 The clerk or any councillor may draft a press release. All press releases must be approved by the clerk before being issued to ensure consistency with council policy and legal requirements (outlined in section 10), as well as to ensure consistency of style across the council and that the use of the press release can be monitored.

Policy developed based on the NALC Media Policy Template Nov 2014, SLCC Model Press and Media Policy 2019 and SLCC Social Media Policy Template July 2016

Appendix I:



Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council Media and Social Media Policy Supplement: Facebook

1. All posts should be created in line with the Council's Communication Strategy.
2. The parish council officers and one authorised councillor are administrators of the SPC Facebook page.
3. The administration officer will monitor posts within the Saxilby with Ingleby community Facebook groups, and will notify the clerk of any issues that may have an impact on the parish council. Other officers and councillors are encouraged to share any concerns they have with the clerk.
4. The administration officer will consult with the clerk to draft a response to social media posts, if it is deemed necessary. If appropriate, the draft may be shared for feedback with other officers and relevant councillors. This will be at the discretion of the clerk.

Posting as a councillor or employee in a personal capacity

5. No councillor or employee should post any comments or information on any social media site that has only come into their possession by reason of their association with Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council, or that is not already in the public domain.
6. Councillors or employees should not state or imply that any post or comment they make on social media is made on behalf of Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council, unless authorised to do so.
7. When posting to Saxilby Community Groups (or any other social media) as a private individual, councillors and employees should take care to clarify that their post is their personal opinion and not that of the council, particularly on topics that may be viewed by the general public as being relevant to the work of the parish council. If in doubt, do not comment.
8. The use of Saxilby Community Groups as a communication channel between councillors, employees, and the public is to be avoided. Any council related communication should be deferred to email at the earliest opportunity.
9. Residents who raise issues asking the council to take action should be encouraged to report the matter directly to the parish council via the communication channels listed in the Facebook Introductory Post (Protocol for Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council Facebook Page, Item 3)



**Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council
Media and Social Media Policy Supplement: WhatsApp**

1. WhatsApp is considered a formal communication tool for councillors and employees. As such, any messages sent or received via WhatsApp within groups created by Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council are subject to Subject Access Requests (SARs) and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.
2. It is essential that councillors and employees ensure all WhatsApp exchanges are professional, appropriate, and in-line with organisational policies. Please refer to the full Media and Social Media Policy for detailed guidance.
3. The below guidelines, agreed at FC25-03, will be regularly posted and pinned in the applicable WhatsApp group chats.

✦ Parish Council Groups – Guidelines for Respectful and Effective Communication ✦

Welcome to this parish council group. It is intended to be used as a communication tool for council related business. We ask all members to follow these guidelines to ensure a respectful, professional, and constructive environment. Participation in the group is subject to applicable council policies including the social media policy and civility and respect pledge.

✔ Be Civil and Respectful

- Treat all members with courtesy and respect.
- Disagreements are natural, but personal attacks, offensive language, and inappropriate comments/content will not be tolerated.

✔ Stay on Topic

- Keep discussions relevant to the group's purpose.
- If a conversation becomes off-topic, please take it to private messages.
- The group is not a forum for complaints—please direct concerns and complaints through the proper council channels.

✔ Messaging Etiquette

- Be mindful of the time when sending messages—avoid late-night, very early, and weekend messages unless urgent.
- There is no expectation of an immediate response, as members may not always be available.
- If a matter requires more detailed discussion, consider arranging a meeting rather than using the group chat.

✔ Use Professional and Clear Communication

- Messages can be subject to public record, Freedom of Information Requests (FOI) and Subject Access Requests (SARS).
- Do not share confidential information.
- Avoid excessive use of emojis, GIFs, or informal language in formal groups.

✔ Moderation and Compliance

- The council has signed up to the civility and respect pledge; It agrees to treat everyone with courtesy and respect and asks for the same in return. As an employer the council has a duty of care to protect staff.

To protect users and the council, messages or members who breach these guidelines may be removed from the group and reported.

Note: Further complementary information about the use of social media is available in the Social Media Civility and Respect Guide and Policy Supplement, Civility and Respect Project.



Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council Social Media: Civility and Respect

The council has adopted the Social Media Civility and Respect Guide and Policy Supplement¹. The advice and guidance provided in the document is focused on civility and respect issues as they relate to the use of social media by local councils and councillors.

1. Engaging with the council on social media

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 Councillors may choose to engage with the community on their own 'councillor' social media accounts.
- 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.

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.

¹ Breakthrough Communications (2022) Actively addressing the issues of Civility and Respect on Social Media: A Social Media Civility and Respect Guide and Policy Supplement produced by Breakthrough Communications, for and on behalf of the Civility and Respect Project.

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 You can contact the Parish Clerk, in the following ways:
 - The Parish Office, St Andrews Community Centre, William Street, Saxilby
 - 01522 703912
 - clerk@saxilbyparishcouncil.gov.uk

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