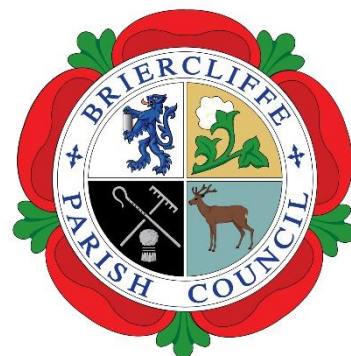


Briercliffe with Extwistle Parish Council

Policy: Social Media



Adopted by: Briercliffe with Extwistle Parish Council – 6th August 2026

Minute Number – 26/27/094

Next Review: August 2029 / Every 3 years or earlier if required

1. Introduction

Briercliffe with Extwistle Parish Council is committed to ensuring that its services and operations are delivered effectively, fairly, and in accordance with relevant legislation and best practice.

Social media is widely used to share information and engage with communities. This policy sets out how the Council uses social media responsibly and outlines the standards expected of Councillors, officers, and those authorised to contribute to Council communications.

The policy is designed to ensure that social media activity is lawful, professional, politically neutral, and protects the reputation of the Council.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Official Parish Council social media accounts
- Councillors when acting in their official capacity
- Officers, volunteers, or contractors authorised to manage or contribute to Council social media

Personal use of social media is not restricted, but behaviour online must not bring the Council into disrepute

3. Purpose of Council Social Media

The Council uses social media to:

- Share factual information about services, meetings, and decisions
- Promote community events and initiatives
- Improve awareness, transparency, and engagement
- Signpost residents to appropriate services or formal channels

Social media must not be used to:

- Campaign for political purposes
- Promote individual councillors
- Debate contentious issues
- Replace statutory or formal Council processes

4. Governance and Account Management

- All official social media accounts are owned by the Council.
- The Council will appoint a named administrator by resolution at a meeting. (Appendix B - Role Description)
- The administrator may be an elected Member or Officer, as agreed by Council.
- The Parish Clerk will retain oversight responsibility but is not required to act as administrator.
- At least two authorised persons should have access to each account to ensure continuity.
- Login details must be held securely and remain the property of the Council.

5. Content Standards

All content published by the Council must:

- be accurate, factual, and timely,
- reflect agreed Council decisions or approved information,
- be respectful, inclusive, and accessible,
- comply with relevant legislation and Council policies.

Posts must not include:

- personal opinions presented as Council policy
- confidential, exempt, or sensitive information
- personal data without a lawful basis
- defamatory, discriminatory, or offensive material

6. Moderation and Engagement

The Council welcomes constructive engagement and feedback but reserves the right to moderate its platforms.

The Council may remove or report content that:

- is abusive, threatening, discriminatory or defamatory,
- contain offensive language,
- breaches data protection or privacy,
- is misleading, spam, or promotional.

The Council will not engage in online arguments

The Council will:

- respond to general enquiries where appropriate,
- signpost complaints or service issues to formal channels,

Published House Rules will be displayed on each platform (Appendix A).

7. Use by Councillors

7.1 Personal and Official Accounts

Councillors must clearly distinguish between:

- personal views, and
- communications made on behalf of the Council.

Personal accounts must not:

- imply they are official Council channels
- use Council branding without permission

Recommended disclaimer:

“The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Parish Council.”

7.2 Standards of Conduct

When using social media in an official capacity, Councillors must:

- comply with the Councillor Code of Conduct
- avoid political campaigning using Council resources
- not disclose confidential or sensitive information
- act respectfully and professionally at all times

8. PURDAH (Pre-Election Period)

During the pre-election period (PURDAH), the Council must comply with heightened restrictions.

During PURDAH:

- Social media content must be strictly factual
- No content may be published that could reasonably be regarded as influencing voters in favour of or against specific candidates
- No promotion of candidates, councillors, or political views is permitted
- Discretionary posting should be paused where possible

The administrators and Clerk are jointly responsible for ensuring compliance during PURDAH.

9. Officers, Volunteers and Authorised Contributors

Officers and authorised contributors:

- must only post within agreed boundaries
- must not comment on controversial, political, or confidential matters
- must not speak on behalf of the Council unless specifically authorised,
- must uphold Council values and professional standards

Personal use of social media must not undermine public confidence in the Council or damage the Council's reputation.

10. Use of Social Media During Meetings

Electronic devices may be used during meetings where they support Council business.

Councillors must:

- remain engaged in proceedings
- not use social media to criticise or mock others
- remember they are personally responsible for any content published

11. Legal and Regulatory Compliance

All social media activity must comply with:

- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Equality Act 2010
- Defamation and copyright law

Social media is not suitable for:

- sharing sensitive personal data, or
- submitting formal complaints
- FOI requests.

12. Training Requirements

The Council recognises that effective and compliant use of social media requires appropriate training.

- The Council will ensure that the appointed administrator receives suitable guidance or training.
- Councillors are encouraged to undertake training on social media, standards of conduct, and communications.
- Refresher training should be offered following significant changes to legislation, guidance, or Council policy.

13. Breaches of the Policy

Failure to comply with this policy may result in:

- removal of content,
- withdrawal of access,
- referral under the Councillor Code of Conduct
- disciplinary action where applicable

14. Confidentiality & Data Protection

The Council will ensure that all personal data is handled in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and relevant legislation.

15. Equality and Diversity

The Council is committed to equality and will not unlawfully discriminate under the Equality Act 2010.

16. Monitoring and Review

This policy will normally be reviewed every three years or earlier if required due to:

- Legislative changes
- Operational Requirements
- Updated national guidance

17. Adoption

This policy was adopted by Briercliffe with Extwistle Parish Council held on 6th August with a meeting Minute Ref **26/27/094**.

Chair Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Date 6th August 2026

Appendix A – Social Media House Rules

These rules apply to all users of the Council's social media platforms.

We welcome comments and engagement, but we ask users to be respectful.

The Council may remove or report posts that:

- are abusive, threatening, or harassing
- are discriminatory or hateful
- contain offensive language
- are defamatory or misleading
- breach privacy or data protection
- are promotional, spam, or repetitive

The Council:

- will not engage in arguments or debates
- may signpost enquiries to formal channels
- reserves the right to restrict users who repeatedly breach these rules

Social media is not the appropriate channel for submitting complaints or FOI requests.

Appendix B - Briercliffe with Extwistle Parish Council

Social Media Administrator – Role Description

1. Purpose

The Social Media Administrator is responsible for managing the day-to-day operation of the Parish Council's official social media accounts, ensuring communications are accurate, appropriate, politically neutral, and compliant with legislation, Council policy, and best practice.

The role supports transparent engagement while protecting the Council's reputation and corporate position.

2. Appointment and Accountability

- The Administrator is appointed by formal resolution at a Parish Council meeting
- The role may be undertaken by an elected Member or an Officer, as determined by Council.
- The Administrator is accountable to the Parish Council as a corporate body.
- The Parish Clerk retains oversight responsibility but is not required to act as the Administrator.

3. Key Responsibilities

The Social Media Administrator will:

- publish content on official Council social media accounts in line with agreed Council decisions;
- ensure all content is factual, balanced, and non-political;
- moderate and comments in accordance with the Council's Social Media Policy and House Rules;
- respond to routine enquiries where appropriate or signpost to formal Council channels;
- ensure login credentials are secure and restricted to authorised persons;
- exercise increased caution during the pre-election period (PURDAH);
- promptly notify the Parish Clerk and/or Chair to any reputational, legal, or safeguarding concerns.

4. Limitations of the Role

The Administrator must not:

- express personal opinions or political views on Council platforms;
- engage in online arguments or commentary on contentious matters;
- publish confidential, exempt, or personal data;
- promote individual councillors, candidates, or campaigns.

5. Policy and Legal Compliance

The Administrator must act in accordance with:

- Social Media Policy (including moderation, conduct, and PURDAH requirements);

- Appendix A – Social Media House Rules;
- Councillor Code of Conduct (where the role is held by a Member);
- Standing Orders (corporate decision-making and delegated authority);
- Data Protection Policy and UK GDPR requirements;
- Freedom of Information Act 2000;
- Equality, defamation, and copyright legislation.

6. Training

The Administrator is expected to undertake appropriate training or briefing relating to:

- social media governance and standards of conduct;
- data protection and reputational risk;
- Code of Conduct responsibilities.

7. Review of Appointment

- The appointment will be reviewed annually or following parish elections.
- The Council may withdraw or reassign the role at any time by resolution.
- Access details must be handed over immediately if the role changes.