



Lostwithiel Town Council

Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

**Policy on Social Media and Electronic Communication
Approved 16 December 2025 Minute 255/25**

Introduction

Lostwithiel Town Council uses social media profiles in a number of ways, including for the promotion of:

- relevant local news stories and events
- to promote the parish to a local and wider audience
- to share information about council meetings
- council-owned facilities
- provide information to the community
- distribute agendas, post minutes and dates of meetings
- advertise council/community events and activities
- advertise Councillor and staff vacancies
- share information from partner agencies such as Principal Authorities, Police, Library, Health etc.
- announce new information
- promote our community positively.
- be open and accountable in all it does.

The Current Official Social Media accounts associated with the Council, are as follows:

- Lostwithiel Town Council Facebook Page
- Lostwithiel Town Council Instagram account
- Stannary Creative Spaces Facebook Page
- Stannary Creative Spaces Instagram account
- Lostwithiel Town Council Linked In Account

Social media pages are only updated during office hours (generally 9am-5pm, Tuesdays-Thursdays but the exact times may vary),

Representing the Council

Only Council employees, or those under temporary paid or unpaid contract to the Council, such as work experience students, are authorised to update social media pages representing Lostwithiel Town Council or any associated council venue or service.

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables the Lostwithiel Town Council (the Council) to interact in a way that improves the communications both within the Council and between the Council and the community, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

The Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time the Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur, this Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

Responsibilities

Lostwithiel Town Council is responsible for ensuring that posts on social media pages representing the Council are neutral in tone and do not promote the personal views of employees.

Lostwithiel Town Council is not responsible for content posted by council employees on their personal social media pages or to any other social media pages.

Lostwithiel Town Councillors may retain an official Councillor social media profile, which is separate and distinct from their personal social media profile. Where Councillors do so, any profile or page should clearly indicate that it is an official councillor page and include their official title, for example, the Mayor of Lostwithiel or Lostwithiel Town Councillor. The Council is not responsible in any way for the personal social media accounts or official Councillor social media profile accounts of any individual (who is also a Town Councillor) or content posted by Councillors on their personal social media/official Councillor social media platforms.

Lostwithiel Town Council is not responsible for content posted on, or otherwise directed to, its social media pages by private citizens or third parties without permission. It will be removed as soon as it comes to light.

Acceptable use

Lostwithiel Town Council reserves the right to remove from its social

media pages, or refuse to interact with, any content posted by third parties which:

- is hate speech, sexist, racist, ageist, homophobic, ableist, or in any other way discriminates against or negatively targets a specific group of people.
- is of a sexual nature, or uses offensive language or profanities
- is illegal, threatening, or promotes illegal activities
- discloses personal details of the user or another user
- advertises products, services or events not relevant to the page on which the advert is posted
- is factually incorrect
- defames or personally targets any council employee or councillor or any other persons professionally associated with the Council, for example volunteers.

Any user posting such content will be removed or blocked from the social media page in question. Threats or details of illegal activities or behaviour will be reported to the police.

Rules for using social media

When participating in online communication Officers and Councillors must:-

- be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent, following The General Principles;

Selflessness.

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity.

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity.

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias..

Accountability.

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness.

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful

Leadership.

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Officers & Councillors must:

- always disclose their identity and affiliation to the Council;
- never make false or misleading statements;
- not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment. They must protect the good reputation of the Council;
- be mindful of the information posted on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council;
- keep the tone of comments respectful and informative; never condescending or “loud.” Use sentence case format, not capital letters, do not write in red to emphasise points.
- refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory
- remarks; language that may be deemed as offensive relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age or religion or belief should not be published on any social media site;
- avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications;
- do not post comments that you would not be prepared make in writing or face to face;

- never name an individual third party unless you have written permission to do so;
- seek the permission of the owner to publish original photographs or videos from the persons or organisations in the video or photograph before they are uploaded. You must check that there is parental permission before photos of children are used;
- respect the privacy of other Councillors, Officers and residents; and
- never post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations, such as libel and copyright.

Officers and Councillors must not allow their interaction on any websites or blogs to damage their working relationships with others. They must not make any derogatory, discriminatory, defamatory or offensive comments about other Officers, Councillors, the Council or about the people, businesses and agencies the Council works with and serves.

Posts must not contain anyone's personal information, other than necessary basic contact details.

If Officers or Councillors blog or tweet personally, and not in their role as an Officer or a Councillor, they must not act, claim to act, or give the impression that they are acting as a representative of the Council. They should not include web links to official Council websites as this may give or reinforce the impression that they are representing the Council.

All Officers and Councillors must ensure they use Council facilities appropriately. If using a Council-provided blog site or social networking area, any posts made will be viewed as made in an official capacity. Do not use Council facilities for personal or political blogs.

Officers and individual Town Councillors are responsible for what they post. They are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published e-mail address, which is used for Council business. Both Officers and Councillors should have separate Council and personal email addresses.

All social media sites in use should be checked on a regular basis to ensure the security settings are in place.

The Council will appoint a nominated “Webmaster” to maintain and update the Town Council Website.

Accountability

This policy outlines the standards the Council requires Councillors and Officers to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which the Council will monitor the use of social media and the action to be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.

Scope of Policy

All Councillors and Officers are always expected to comply with this Policy to protect the reputation, privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the Council, its services, employees, partners and community.

Serious breaches of this policy by employees may be dealt with under the Employee Disciplinary Procedure. The Council may take disciplinary action in respect of unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive comments by an employee.

Breach of the policy by volunteers will result in the Council no longer using their services and, if necessary, appropriate action will be taken.

Behaviour required by the Members’ Code of Conduct shall apply to online activity in the same way it does 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.

Remarks are easily withdrawn, apologised for and forgotten when made in person, but posting them on the internet means that they have been published in a way that cannot be contained. Online content should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate.

Councillors must be aware that their profile as a Councillor means the more likely it will be perceived that they are acting in an official capacity when blogging or networking. It must be remembered that

communications on the internet are permanent and public. When communicating in a 'private' group it should be ensured that the Council would be content with the statement should it be made public.

Communications to & from the Council

Communications from the Council will meet the following criteria:-

- Be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- Not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright;
- Not contain any personal information.
- Council Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

The Council wishes to ensure that all discussions on the Council pages are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives.

The sites are not monitored 24/7 and we will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, we will endeavour to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people or authorities. Please do not include personal/private information in your social media posts to us.

Sending a message/post via Facebook/Instagram will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and we will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through these channels.

Instead, please make direct contact with the Town Clerk and/or members of the council by phone: 01208 872323 or email: clerk@lostwithieltowncouncil.gov.uk

The Council's nominated moderator is the Town Clerk. They will be responsible for posting and monitoring of the content on Council pages, ensuring it complies with the Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy. The moderator will have authority to immediately, without notice or

comment, remove any posts from the Council's social media pages if they are deemed to be inflammatory or of a defamatory or libellous nature.

If the post alleges a breach of a Council's policy or the law the person who posted it will be asked to submit a formal complaint to the Council or report the matter to the Police as soon as possible to allow due process.

If a matter raised in any form of social media needs further consideration by the Council it should be referred to the Town Clerk to present to Full Council. Again the 'poster' shall be informed via the page or direct message that this is the case and invited to contact the Town Clerk direct. Any response agreed by the Council will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Email.

The Town Clerk & all office staff have their own council email addresses. The email account is monitored mainly during office hours, Tuesday to Thursday and we aim to reply to all questions sent as soon as we can. An 'out of office' message should be used when appropriate.

The Town Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and passing on any relevant mail to members or external agencies for information and/or action. All communications on behalf of the Council will usually come from the Town Clerk, and/or otherwise will always be copied to the Town Clerk. All new emails requiring data to be passed on, will be followed up with a Data Consent request before action is taken with that correspondence.

All communications on behalf of the Council must come from the Town Clerk.

All members of staff and every Councillor have their own Council email addresses which must be used for any communications regarding the Town Council, no other email addresses will be acceptable.

In relation to Councillors own personal views these should not be communicated using the lostwithielcouncillors.org.uk email.

The Council reserves the right to access an electronic tablet or all areas of any computer and software systems which it owns.

These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

SMS/WhatsApp (texting/messaging).

Members and the Clerk may use texting/messaging as a convenient way to communicate at times. All are reminded that this policy also applies to such messages.

Video Conferencing e.g. Zoom, Teams etc.

If this medium is used to communicate, please note that this policy also applies to the use of video conferencing.

Internal communication and access to information within the Council.

The Council is continually looking at ways to improve its working and the use of social media and electronic communications is a major factor in delivering improvement.

Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act in all their work on behalf of the Council.

As more and more information becomes available at the press of a button, it is vital that all information is treated sensitively and securely. Councillors are expected to maintain an awareness of the confidentiality of information that they have access to and not to share confidential information with anyone. Failure to properly observe confidentiality may be seen as a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct and will be dealt with through its prescribed procedures (at the extreme it may also involve a criminal investigation).

Members should also be careful only to cc essential recipients on emails i.e. to avoid use of the 'Reply to All' option if at all possible, but of course copying in all who need to know and ensuring that email trails have been removed.