

Bredhurst Parish Council

Media and Social Media Management Policy

Adopted: January 2026

Reviewed and Amended : September 2026



1. Introduction

- a) Bredhurst Parish Council is committed to being open, transparent, and accessible in its communications with residents, stakeholders, and the media.
- b) The Council uses both traditional media and social media to:
 - Broaden and strengthen local democracy through a well-informed public
 - Raise awareness of the Council's policies, services, and functions
 - Publicise meetings, decisions, and activities of the Council
 - Promote the Council's role as a community leader
 - Support partnership working with other organisations
 - Enable effective dialogue with local people
 - Communicate public safety messages and information in emergencies.
- c) This policy defines the roles and responsibilities of Councillors and the Clerk when dealing with the media and when using social media on behalf of the Council.
- d) This policy is not intended to restrict freedom of speech, but to provide a clear framework for effective, lawful, and professional communication.
- e) For the purposes of this policy, the term *media* includes press, radio, television, websites, and social media platforms.
- f) All Councillors and officers must have due regard for the reputation of the Council and must always comply with the Council's Code of Conduct.
- g) Confidential or exempt information must not be disclosed under any circumstances.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- a) All official Bredhurst Parish Council media and social media activity
- b) All Councillors –
- c) The Clerk and any Council employees, contractors, or volunteers who are authorised to communicate on behalf of the Council

It covers both official Council accounts and references to Council business made on personal social media accounts.

3. Meetings and the Media

- a) Agendas and minutes of Council meetings will be made available to the media on request and published in accordance with statutory requirements.
- b) Attendance of the media at Council meetings is welcome. Facilities for reporting will be provided where reasonably requested.
- c) The media are entitled to report on public meetings of the Council, including filming, photographing, recording, or making written commentary, subject to any legal restrictions.

4. Communication with the Media

- a) Contact with the media, whether initiated by the Council or as a response to an enquiry, should be managed by the Clerk in the first instance, with referral to the Chair where appropriate.
- b) Media enquiries will be handled efficiently and in a timely manner.
- c) Wherever possible, information provided to the media should be in writing to avoid misunderstanding or misreporting.
- d) Press releases will be prepared and issued by the Clerk in consultation with the Chair.
- e) All Council publicity must be objective, balanced, and politically neutral, and must not seek to influence support for any political party.
- f) Councillors should only comment to the media on behalf of the Council if they are authorised to do so and are confident in the accuracy of the information provided. The Clerk must be informed of any media approach.
- g) Where a Councillor is not authorised to speak on behalf of the Council, they may express a personal view but must make it clear that it is their own opinion and not that of the Council.
- h) It is the responsibility of the individual Councillor to correct any comments that are misconstrued as representing the views of the Council.

5. Urgent Situations

In urgent situations where it is not possible to refer media enquiries to the Clerk or Chair, Councillors may make a statement on behalf of the Council, provided that:

- a) The statement reflects the Council's agreed position
- b) Confidential information is not disclosed
- c) The reputation of the Council is protected

The Clerk and Chair must be informed as soon as practicable.

6. Social Media Use

6.1 Purpose of Social Media

The Council uses social media to:

- a) Share information about meetings, decisions, and services
- b) Promote community events and initiatives
- c) Improve engagement with residents
- d) Signpost residents to official information

Social media must not be used as a substitute for formal decision-making or statutory communications.

6.2 Approved Platforms

The Council currently has a public Bredhurst Parish Council Facebook Page, a closed Bredhurst Community Facebook Group and a residents' community WhatsApp Group.

Additional platforms may only be used with Council approval.

6.3 Account Management

- a) All official social media accounts are owned by Bredhurst Parish Council
- b) Accounts will be managed by the Clerk and nominated Councillors
- c) Login details must be held securely and updated when personnel change
- d) At least two authorised individuals should have access to each account
- e) Joining question for the Community Facebook Group must be answered in full.

7. Content and Tone

7.1 Appropriate Content

- a) Council social media and media communications may include:
- b) Meeting notices
- c) Agendas
- d) Published minutes
- e) Council decisions
- f) Public notices
- g) Community news and events
- h) Emergency or urgent information
- i) Links to official Council publications and websites

7.2 Prohibited Content

- a) The following must not be published
- b) Political material
- c) Confidential or exempt information
- d) Personal data without appropriate consent
- e) Defamatory, discriminatory, or offensive material
- f) Comments likely to bring the Council into disrepute

7.3 Tone and Style

- a) All communications must be
- b) Accurate
- c) Factual
- d) Clear
- e) Respectful
- f) Inclusive
- g) Written in plain English
- h) Professional and neutral in tone

8. Engagement, Moderation, and Comments

- a) The Council welcomes constructive engagement via social media.
- b) Posts made to the Bredhurst Parish Council Facebook Page may also be shared to the Bredhurst Community Facebook Group where appropriate.
- c) The following rules apply to Council-managed social media:
 - Be kind and courteous
 - No hate speech, bullying, promotions or spam
 - Advertising from outside organisations is at the discretion of Bredhurst Parish Council
- d) The Council reserves the right to remove or hide comments that breach these rules or this policy.
- e) Persistent breaches may result in users being blocked from Council-managed platforms.

9. Legal and Regulatory Framework

All media and social media activities must comply with:

- a) Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- b) Freedom of Information Act 2000
- c) Equality Act 2010
- d) Defamation law
- e) Local Government publicity and transparency requirements
- f) The Parish Council Code of Conduct
- g) Social media content may be subject to Freedom of Information requests.

10. Personal Use of Social Media

- a) When using personal social media accounts, Councillors and officers are personally responsible for their content
- b) Must not disclose confidential Council information
- c) Must not imply they are speaking on behalf of the Council unless authorised
- d) Should clearly distinguish personal opinions from Council business

11. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner if legislation, guidance, or Council practice changes.

Appendix A – Public Media and Social Media Statement

Bredhurst Parish Council welcomes engagement with residents, community groups, and the media. We use traditional media and social media to share information about Council meetings, decisions, services, and community matters.

We encourage respectful discussion and constructive feedback. To ensure our platforms remain welcoming and informative, we ask users to engage courteously and responsibly.

The Council reserves the right to moderate content in line with this policy and relevant legislation.

Appendix B – Social Media Moderation Rules (Public Facing)

When engaging with Bredhurst Parish Council online, users must:

- a) Be polite, respectful, and considerate of others
- b) Avoid offensive, abusive, discriminatory, or defamatory language
- c) Not post confidential or personal information, spam, promotions, or repetitive content.
- d) Only advertising relating to Bredhurst Parish Council supported activities and Bredhurst charity/community events will be allowed.
- e) Posts advertising businesses and services will be posted at the discretion of Bredhurst Parish Council.

The Council may remove comments or posts that breach these rules and may block users if breaches are persistent or serious.

Appendix C – Internal Social Media Moderation Guidance (Officers and Councillors)

a) **Monitoring**

Council social media platforms should be monitored regularly by the Clerk or nominated Councillors.

b) **When to Remove Content**

Content may be removed if it:

- 1) Breaches the moderation rules or this policy
- 2) Is defamatory, misleading, or factually incorrect
- 3) Contains personal data
- 4) Is abusive, threatening, or discriminatory.

c) **Record Keeping**

Where content is removed, a screenshot should be retained where appropriate, noting:

- a) Date and time
- b) Platform
- c) Reason for removal

4. **Responding to Comments**

Responses should be polite, factual, and non-confrontational. Where issues require formal action, users should be directed to official Council channels.

Appendix D – Alignment with National Guidance

This policy is informed by and aligned with:

- a) National Association of Local Councils (NALC) guidance on communications and social media
- b) Local Government Association (LGA) guidance on publicity
- c) The Members' Code of Conduct

Councillors are reminded that online activity forms part of their public role and may be considered when assessing compliance with the Code of Conduct.

Appendix E – Quick Reference for Councillors and Staff

- a) Only authorised individuals may speak to the media on behalf of the Council
 - b) Always distinguish between personal views and Council positions
 - c) Never disclose confidential or exempt information
 - d) Assume social media content is public and permanent
 - e) When in doubt, refer media enquiries or online issues to the Clerk
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Next Review Due: September 2028