

Toft Newton Parish Council

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SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY 2026 v001

This policy replaces the Toft Newton Parish Council Social Media Policy that was adopted in July 2020.

Since the adoption of the previous policy, the social media world has moved forward at a rapid rate and subsequently, the previous policy was considerably outdated.

In addition to this policy, Councillors should be mindful of the Code of Conduct. Councillors, employees and volunteers should be mindful of the Standing Orders 2026 v002 and our IT Policy (adopted 5th of May 2026) and Communications Policy (adopted 7th of July 2026). The Local Government Association has also recently updated their guidance for Councillors' use of social media; this guidance can be viewed in full at: <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/communications-and-community-engagement/model-guidance-councils-elected-members-use>.

Introduction

The need for a revised policy has arisen due to the vast advancements in social media technology since the previous policy was written.

In 2021, Councillors approved the creation of a Facebook presence, there is however, no evidence that a Facebook profile, page or group was created.

When the previous Clerk was in post, he would share information from his personal Facebook profile between 2022 and 2024, until he stopped using Facebook, since then it has been more difficult for the parish council to share information quickly with residents. As a result, Councillor Nicola Grimmett was appointed as the Social Media Champion in July 2026.

However, sharing information from a personal profile is not considered good practice and might leave Councillor's or staff personal profiles open to the requirements of Data Protection legislation and subsequent subject access requests or freedom of information requests by members of the public.

Therefore, following on from recent discussions with Councillors, and the passing of a resolution in September 2026, Councillors have agreed to a Toft Newton Parish Council Facebook group being created, for the sharing of information from the parish council website.

Standard moderation rules will apply to all members of the group, in that no profanities may be used, abusive and discriminatory language will not be tolerated, and failure to comply will result in the privileges of being able to post in the group being removed, and in the worst-case scenario members can be removed from the group.

There will also need to be clear rules on what information residents can share on the group, e.g., will residents be able to share information about their own business or parish-based organisations, events that they are organising, lost pets, sales posts, issues within the parish, etc., this will need to be clarified before the group accepts members, and will need to be reviewed regularly.

A separate document will be produced containing the full membership and moderation criteria, which will be added as an appendix to this policy.

What is Social Media?

The Cambridge Dictionary defines social media as:

“websites and computer programs that allow people to communicate and share information, opinions, pictures, videos, etc., on the internet, especially social networking websites”.

This interaction may be through computers, mobile phones, tablets and other technology such as watches and smart televisions.

Social media platforms include websites and apps, this policy covers the use of all methods of accessing social media from a Council's perspective, this includes the use of software or apps that can be used to automatically share, or pre-programme the sharing of content.

Jadu, our website service, which is provided for free by Lincolnshire County Council, allows the sharing of information directly from our website to Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and the news and events updates can be viewed by accessing a Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed, for which specialist software might be required.

Council Use Of Social Media

While the Toft Newton Parish Council Facebook Group is becoming established, the Social Media Champion is authorised to share information to the public Facebook groups that cover the Parish of Toft Newton, these include, but are not limited to the two groups that cover Newtoft, the group for Tudor Close residents and any other group that might benefit from receiving the information, especially if information being shared covers an area larger than just our parish.

The Consultant to the Council has asked that St Michael's Church is Newton by Toft share the dates of our Parish Council meetings, in return for the Parish Council sharing details of Church events.

Principles

- To publish information about the work of Toft Newton Parish Council to a wider audience.
- To avoid entering into online debates or arguments about the Council's work.
- Social Media must NOT be used in the recruitment process for employees or new councillors - other than for the sole purpose of placing vacancy advertisements.

Approved Council Social Media

- Toft Newton Parish Council Facebook group – link to be provide once group is created.
- Toft Newton Parish Council website: <https://toft-newton.parish.lincolnshire.gov.uk/>.
- RSS Feed – News: <https://toft-newton.parish.lincolnshire.gov.uk/rss/news>.
- RSS Feed – Events: <https://toft-newton.parish.lincolnshire.gov.uk/rss/events>.

Users of Council Social Media

- In accordance with the Council's adopted Communications Policy, the Parish Council Clerk is the Council's nominated Press Officer with the authority to issue official press releases.
- This policy authorises the Social Media Champion to post information on the Social Media platforms as detailed herein, with the permission of the Full Council.
- No other employees or Councillors (other than the Chair or Vice Chair deputising for the Council Clerk) has the authority to issue public statements on behalf of the Council, but are encouraged to share our public posts either from our Facebook group or directly from our

website to reach a wider audience, therefore, increasing the visibility and understanding of parish council business.

1. Guidance for Council Officers on the use of Council Social Media

- Officers should be familiar with the terms of use on third party websites – e.g. Facebook - and adhere to these at all times
- No information should be published that is not already known to be in the public domain – i.e. available on the Council's website, contained in minutes of meetings, stated in Council publicised policies and procedures, etc.
- Information that is published should be factual, fair, thorough and transparent.
- Everyone must be mindful that information published in this way may stay in the public domain indefinitely, without the opportunity for retrieval / deletion.
- Copyright laws must be respected.
- Conversations or reports that are meant to be private or internal must not be published without permission.
- Other organisations should not be referenced without their approval – when referencing, link back to the original source wherever possible.
- Do not publish anything that would be regarded in the workplace as unacceptable.
- Staff must remember that they will be seen as ambassadors for the Council and should always act in a responsible and socially aware manner.

2. Third party Social Media and Individual Councillor Usage

Councillors need to think about whether they are acting in a private capacity, or whether any impression might be conveyed that they are acting for and on behalf of Toft Newton Parish Council.

The Council has adopted a Code of Conduct which is binding on all members. If you use Social Media in your official capacity as a councillor, you should always be mindful of the Code, and of the seven Nolan principles applicable to holding public office – selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Do:

- Set appropriate privacy settings for any blog or networking site
- Watch out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on any blog or page and remove them as soon as possible to avoid any perception that you condone such views
- Be aware that the higher your profile as a councillor, the more likely it is that you may be seen as acting in an official capacity when you blog or network
- Ensure any Council facilities are used appropriately – if using a Council-provided blog site or social networking area, any posts that you make are extremely likely to be viewed as being made in your official capacity
- Avoid publishing any information that you could only have accessed in your position as a councillor
- Be careful if making 'political' points and avoid being specific or personal about individuals.

Don't:

- Post in haste
- Post comments that you would not be prepared to make in writing or in face-to-face contact
- Use Council facilities for personal or political purposes

Further Information

In addition to the Local Government Association guidance referenced on the first page of this policy, the LGA has also published the following:

Guidance on using social media for councillors

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/communications-and-community-engagement/social-media-guidance-councillors>.

Digital citizenship: support and resources for councillors

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/civility-public-life-resources-councillors/handling-abuse-and-0>

Primacy

Where any conflict exists between this policy and the Government's guidance or legislation on the use of social media or the terms of service of such platforms, the legislation and / or contractual obligations shall have primacy over this policy.

Reviews

Toft Newton Parish Council will review this policy as per the schedule below, or sooner if changes to local or national guidance or legislation require a revision to take place sooner.

Previous versions of this policy will be retained on the Zoho WorkDrive and will have a version number appended to their file name.

Approved by Toft Newton Parish Council on:	8 th September 2026
First review due:	May 2029
Then review:	Every three years
