



PENDINE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Adopted: 16th July 2026

Review Date: 17th July 2027

1. Purpose

Pendine Community Council recognises that social media is an important tool for communicating with residents, visitors and stakeholders. This policy sets out how the Council manages its social media presence and how users are expected to behave when engaging with Council-operated pages.

This policy aims to:

- Promote positive and constructive engagement;
- Ensure information is shared accurately and promptly;
- Protect councillors, staff, volunteers and residents from abuse and harassment;
- Ensure compliance with relevant legislation and good governance principles.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All Council operated social media accounts;
- Councillors and employees when posting on behalf of the Council;
- Members of the public engaging with Council social media platforms.

This includes but is not limited to:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- X (Twitter)



- Community forums
- Future social media platforms utilised by the Council.

3. Legislative and Governance Framework

This policy operates alongside:

- Local Government Act 1972
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK GDPR
- Defamation Act 2013
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998 (Article 10 – Freedom of Expression)
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Communications Act 2003
- Council Code of Conduct
- Council Complaints Policy

Whilst the Council recognises an individual's right to freedom of expression, this right is not absolute and does not extend to harassment, intimidation, persistent disruption or abuse.

4. Official Council Accounts

Only authorised persons may post on behalf of the Council.

The Clerk shall normally administer Council social media accounts unless otherwise resolved by Council.

All content posted should:

- Be factual;



- Be politically neutral;
- Promote community engagement;
- Avoid bringing the Council into disrepute.

5. Public Engagement Principles

The Council welcomes:

- ✓ Questions
- ✓ Suggestions
- ✓ Constructive criticism
- ✓ Debate and differing opinions

The Council does not seek to remove comments solely because they are critical of the Council.

6. Unacceptable Behaviour

The Council reserves the right to hide, remove or restrict comments and users where content includes:

Abuse and Harassment

- Threatening behaviour;
- Personal attacks;
- Intimidation;
- Offensive language;
- Defamatory statements.

Discrimination

Content that is racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic or discriminatory under the Equality Act 2010.



Misinformation

Knowingly posting false or misleading information.

Privacy Breaches

Publishing personal information, addresses, telephone numbers or confidential information.

Spam

Repeated posting of identical or substantially similar comments.

Trolling and Persistent Disruption

The Council recognises that persistent disruptive behaviour may undermine meaningful engagement.

Examples include:

- Posting negative comments on every Council post regardless of subject matter;
- Repeatedly raising the same issue after explanations have already been provided;
- Deliberately attempting to provoke arguments;
- Repeatedly diverting discussions away from the purpose of the post;
- Using social media solely as a platform to attack or undermine the Council;
- Posting comments designed to discourage community participation or damage public confidence without legitimate basis.

Persistent disruptive behaviour of this nature may be considered trolling.

7. Moderation Procedure

Where possible, the following escalation process will be followed:

Stage 1 – Response

The Council may provide an explanation or clarification.

Stage 2 – Warning



A user may be advised that their behaviour is becoming repetitive or disruptive.

Stage 3 – Comment Moderation

Comments may be hidden or removed.

Stage 4 – Restriction

Users may be restricted from commenting.

Stage 5 – Blocking

In cases of:

- persistent trolling;
- harassment;
- abuse;
- threatening behaviour;
- defamatory allegations;

the Council may block the user from its social media pages.

The Council is not obliged to provide an unlimited platform for individuals whose conduct unreasonably disrupts community engagement.

8. Evidence and Record Keeping

Before moderation action is taken, where practicable:

- screenshots shall be retained;
- dates and posts recorded;
- reasons for moderation noted.

The Clerk shall maintain a record of significant moderation decisions.

9. Councillors and Staff



Councillors and employees should:

- remain professional;
- avoid engaging in arguments online;
- avoid responding emotionally;
- refer complaints through formal Council procedures.

Councillors and staff should not use personal accounts to disclose confidential Council information.

10. Complaints

Any person dissatisfied with moderation decisions may submit a complaint under the Council's Complaints Procedure.

The Council's decision regarding moderation of its social media pages shall be final.

11. Freedom of Expression Statement

The Council acknowledges that criticism of public bodies forms an important part of democratic engagement.

However, freedom of expression does not oblige the Council to host:

- harassment;
- abuse;
- persistent trolling;
- repetitive disruptive conduct;
- misinformation;
- behaviour likely to deter others from engaging with Council communications.

The Council has a legitimate interest in ensuring its social media pages remain safe, constructive and accessible community spaces.

