



## STOTFOLD TOWN COUNCIL

### SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY 2025

#### 1. Purpose

This policy sets out how the Council uses social media to inform and engage with residents. It also outlines expected behaviours and how inappropriate content will be handled.

#### 2. What We Use Social Media For

- Sharing Council news, updates, and events.
- Promoting consultations and asking for feedback.
- Posting live updates during events or meetings.
- Sharing partner and community group activities.

Accounts are managed by the Town Clerk, with support from designated Officers. Platforms include (but are not limited to) Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and others.

#### 3. General Rules

- Accounts are monitored during working hours.
- Political content or comments will be removed.
- Offensive or illegal content will be deleted.
- The Council may correct misinformation but won't engage in political debate.
- Service disruptions or downtime are outside our control.

#### 4. Respectful Conduct Online

We welcome feedback, but:

- Abuse, threats, or personal attacks will not be tolerated.
- Persistent trolling (repeated negative or misleading posts) may lead to blocking.
- All users should engage respectfully and avoid hate speech or harassment.

#### 5. Moderation and Enforcement

##### Moderation

Content may be hidden or removed if it includes:

- Hate speech, discrimination, or defamation.
- Harassment, threats, or offensive language.
- Political or campaign messages.
- Spam or privacy breaches.

##### Enforcement:

- First offences may receive a warning.
- Repeated or serious breaches may result in blocking or reports to platform admins or the police if criminal.

## 6. Appeals Process

Users can appeal deletions by contacting the Town Clerk within 5 working days. Appeals will be reviewed fairly, and decisions will be explained. Content involving hate speech or threats will not be reinstated.

## 7. Councillor Use

- Councillors must clearly state when their posts are personal views.
- The Council logo may not be used without permission.
- Councillors must not post anonymously or use offensive language.
- Councillors are responsible for their posts and must follow the Code of Conduct.

## 8. Safety and Escalation

If a Councillor or Officer faces threats or harassment online:

- Report it immediately to the Town Clerk and/or Police.
- Screenshots or URLs should be saved as evidence.
- Serious threats will be escalated to the police, Action Fraud or legal services as appropriate.

## 9. Data Protection

- Only authorised staff may post on behalf of the Council.
- No personal or confidential information should be shared.
- Suspected data breaches must be reported immediately to the Town Clerk and may be reported to the ICO.

## 10. Best Practice

- Avoid libellous, discriminatory, or offensive content.
- Do not use Council accounts for personal gain or campaigning.
- Stay within the Equality & Diversity and Civility & Respect policies.

## 11. Posting Frequency

- Accounts are updated regularly, typically daily, depending on updates and events.
- Key posts (e.g. emergencies, meetings) will be prioritised.
- Posting frequency may change based on resources and need.

## 12. Crisis Communication

In emergencies:

- Verified updates will be posted by the Town Clerk or delegated staff.
- Rumours will not be addressed.
- Comments may be disabled to prevent the spread of misinformation.

## 13. Elections

- During election periods, Council social media will remain neutral.
- Candidates must follow **Electoral Commission** rules and may need to pause political accounts.

---

**Revision History:**

Date Adopted	June 2025	
Date Reviewed		