Meeting Date	**9th April 2025**
Report Subject	**Social media**
Contact	**Clerk/Chair**

Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council
Social Media Policy

1. **Introduction**
   Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council recognises the importance of social media as a tool for communication, engagement, and transparency with the local community. This policy sets out guidelines for the responsible use of social media by councillors, employees, and the public when engaging with the council's online presence.
2. **Purpose**
   The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure the effective and appropriate use of social media by the council.
- Promote respectful and constructive online interactions.
- Protect the council's reputation and prevent misuse of its online platforms.

3. **Scope**
   This policy applies to all social media accounts operated by the council and to individual councillors and employees when posting in an official capacity. It also applies to interactions by members of the public on council-run social media platforms.
4. **Official Council Accounts**
   4.1. The council will maintain official social media accounts to provide updates, share information, and engage with the community.
   4.2. Only authorised persons may post on behalf of the council.
   4.3. Official posts must be factual, non-political, and aligned with council decisions and policies.
   4.4. The Clerk or designated administrator will oversee content and ensure compliance with this policy.
5. **Councillors' and Employees' Use of Social Media**
   5.1. Councillors and employees must clearly distinguish between personal opinions and official council positions.
   5.2. When commenting on council matters in a personal capacity, individuals should make it clear they are speaking on their own behalf, not the council's.
   5.3. Confidential or sensitive council information must never be shared on social media.
   5.4. Councillors and employees should uphold professionalism, avoiding offensive, defamatory, or discriminatory remarks.
6. **Public Interaction and Moderation**
   6.1. The council encourages constructive engagement and respectful discussions on its social media pages.
   6.2. Comments containing offensive, abusive, defamatory, or misleading content may be removed, and repeat offenders may be blocked.
   6.3. The council will not engage in political debate or respond to personal grievances via social media.

7. **Compliance and Enforcement**
   7.1. Breaches of this policy by councillors may be considered a violation of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.
   7.2. Employees violating this policy may face disciplinary action.
   7.3. Any legal breaches, including defamatory statements or misuse of council resources, may be referred to the appropriate authorities.
8. **Review of Policy**
   8.1. This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains up to date with best practices and legislative changes.
9. **What is Social Media?**
   Social media refers to online platforms that allow users to create, share, and engage with content, as well as communicate with others in real time. These platforms include but are not limited to:

- **Facebook** – A social networking site for sharing updates, images, and engaging with community groups.
- **Twitter (X)** – A microblogging platform for sharing short messages and news updates.
- **Instagram** – A photo and video-sharing platform used for visual storytelling.
- **Threads** – A text-based social media app linked to Instagram, allowing for discussions and engagement.
- **LinkedIn** – A professional networking platform for business and council-related discussions.
- **Next-door** – A neighbourhood-based platform for local community engagement.
- **YouTube** – A video-sharing platform used for informational and promotional content.

The council may use any of these or future emerging platforms to communicate with the public and share important updates. Users engaging on these platforms should follow the guidelines set out in this policy.

Adopted by Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council on [9/4/2025]

Review Date: April 2026