CAPEL PARISH COUNCIL

Communications and Social Media Policy

How the Council speaks to the public, the press and online

Status	Final	**Policy owner**	Parish Clerk
Adopted	November 2026	**Minute reference**	Item 18, 16/11/2026
Last reviewed	November 2026	**Next review**	November 2027
Review cycle	Annual	**Applies to**	Council, committees, staff and members

1. Purpose and scope

This policy sets out how the Council communicates: the website, email, notices, newsletters, the press and social media. It replaces the separate social media guidelines and the press policy referred to in Standing Orders. It applies to the Council's official channels and to anyone acting, or who could reasonably be seen as acting, as a councillor or employee. It sits with the Code of Conduct, the Information Governance Policy and the Equality Policy.

2. Principles

Communications must be accurate, courteous, accessible, politically impartial and consistent with Council decisions. The website is the main source of official information and is kept current and accessible (a website accessibility statement is published).

3. Who speaks for the Council

- **The Council speaks through the Chair and the Clerk.** Press and media enquiries are passed to the Clerk, who replies with factual information or Council policy, or refers the matter to the Chair.
- Individual councillors may report Council decisions accurately but must not imply they speak for the Council unless authorised. They may express personal views in a personal capacity, making clear they are personal, and may speak to the press as individuals. This replaces any earlier rule banning councillors from speaking to the press.
- During the election period the Council follows the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity and does not promote candidates or parties.

4. Official social media accounts

- Only the Council may approve an account. The Clerk is the account owner and may authorise named administrators.
- Use Council-controlled logins, strong unique passwords and multi-factor authentication. Remove access when a role ends.
- Post accurately and fairly. Correct errors promptly. Pause and ask the Clerk before posting anything sensitive, disputed, confidential, legally risky, or about an emergency.
- Accounts must never be used for party-political or campaigning purposes.

5. Councillors' personal use

- You are personally responsible for what you post, share or allow to remain on your accounts. The Code of Conduct applies online whenever you are or appear to be acting as a councillor, even with a disclaimer.
- Keep an open mind on matters the Council has yet to decide. Do not post anything suggesting a decision is already made, or that could create apparent bias.
- Do not share confidential information, personal data, private legal advice or closed-session material.
- Be respectful. Do not post abusive, discriminatory, threatening or defamatory content.

6. Moderation

The Council welcomes constructive criticism and will not remove comments simply because they are critical. Content may be hidden or removed if it is unlawful, threatening, abusive, discriminatory, defamatory, spam, advertising, reveals personal data, or breaches the platform's rules. Where safe, a warning is given first. Significant decisions are recorded. Social media is not a route for complaints or information requests, which are redirected to the Clerk (see the Complaints Procedure and Information Governance Policy).

7. Privacy, images and records

Publish only the personal information needed. Obtain consent for identifiable photographs or quotes (particularly children). Posts may be Council records and disclosable. Deleting a post does not remove record-keeping duties.

8. Security and incidents

Do not share passwords. Watch for phishing and impersonation. Report loss of access, compromise, accidental disclosure or threats to the Clerk immediately. The Clerk considers referral to the police, the platform, insurers or the ICO.

9. Breaches and review

Suspected breaches are reported to the Clerk and handled under the Code of Conduct, the employment procedures or the Complaints Procedure as appropriate. This policy creates no separate disciplinary power. It is reviewed annually.

Quick check before posting: Am I authorised, and is my capacity clear? Is it accurate, necessary, respectful and lawful? Does it contain confidential or personal information? Could it prejudice a decision, complaint or election? Would I be comfortable with it being quoted publicly?