



Cyngor Cymuned Ynysybwl & Coed Y Cwm Community Council

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. Policy Statement

Ynysybwl & Coed Y Cwm Community Council recognises the importance of social media as a powerful tool for communication, engagement, and transparency within our community. This policy outlines the principles and guidelines for the appropriate and effective use of social media by the Council, its Councillors, employees, and volunteers. The Council's social media channels aim to supplement the information published on the website and any newsletters that are produced. The Council is committed to using social media responsibly to:

- Inform residents about Council activities, decisions, and services.
- Engage with the community, listen to feedback, and address concerns.
- Promote local events, initiatives, and community achievements.
- Enhance the Council's reputation as an open, accessible, and responsive local authority.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all official social media accounts managed by Ynysybwl & Coed Y Cwm Community Council. It also provides guidance for Councillors, employees, and volunteers when using personal social media accounts where their association with the Council might be inferred or where their posts could impact the Council's reputation.

3. Definitions

- **Social Media:** Online platforms and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking (e.g., Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, community forums, blogs). Social media has the following characteristics:
 - It covers a wide variety of formats including text, video, photographs and audio.
 - It allows messages to flow between many different types of devices including PC's, phones, and tablets.
 - It involves different levels of engagement by participants who can create, comment, or just view information.



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- It speeds and broadens the flow of information.
- It lets communication take place in real time or intermittently.
- **Official Council Social Media Accounts:** Accounts explicitly created, managed, and controlled by the Community Council for official communication.
- **Councillors, Employees, and Volunteers:** All individuals elected to or working for the Community Council in any capacity.

4. Guiding Principles

All social media use by or on behalf of the Council will adhere to the following principles:

- **Accuracy:** All information shared must be factual, accurate, and up to date.
- **Respect:** All interactions must be respectful, courteous, and professional. Discriminatory, offensive, or inflammatory language is strictly prohibited.
- **Transparency:** Clearly identify official council communications. Be clear about who is speaking (e.g., Council, individual Councillor).
- **Accountability:** Be prepared to stand by what is posted and correct errors promptly.
- **Confidentiality:** Do not disclose confidential information, personal data, or commercially sensitive material.
- **Legality:** Comply with all relevant laws and regulations, including data protection (GDPR/DPA 2018), copyright, defamation, and equal opportunities legislation.
- **Impartiality:** Maintain political neutrality in official Council communications.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The Clerk to the Council:

- Overall responsibility for the implementation and oversight of this policy.
- Designated as the primary administrator for official Council social media accounts, or will delegate this responsibility to authorised individuals.
- Ensures appropriate training is provided to those managing social media, including on this policy, data protection principles, platform-specific best practices, and de-escalation techniques.
- Monitors compliance with this policy.



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Authorised Social Media Administrators:

- Individuals formally designated by the Clerk to manage official Council social media accounts.
- Responsible for creating, posting, and monitoring content in line with this policy.
- Must be familiar with the Council's policies, services, and key messages.
- Responsible for the security of official accounts, including using strong passwords, enabling two-factor authentication where available, and reporting any suspicious activity immediately.

All Councillors, Employees, and Volunteers:

- Responsible for understanding and adhering to this policy.
- Must exercise good judgement when using social media, both officially and personally.

6. Guidelines for Official Council Social Media Accounts

6.1. Content and Posting

- **Purpose:** Content should primarily relate to Council business, services, community news, events, and relevant local information. This may include sharing information from other tiers of local government and public authorities and sharing information from other groups within the Community (e.g. community groups, clubs, associations, and bodies).
- **Tone:** Maintain a professional, informative, and approachable tone.
- **Accuracy:** Verify all facts before posting. Correct any inaccuracies promptly and transparently.
- **Clarity:** Use clear, concise language, avoiding jargon.
- **Accessibility:** Ensure content is accessible to all users by, for example, providing alternative text for images and captions for videos, in line with accessibility best practices.
- **Copyright:** Respect copyright and intellectual property rights. Obtain permission before sharing third-party content where necessary.
- **Personal Data:** Never post personal data of individuals (e.g., names, addresses, contact details, photos without explicit consent).
- **Images/Videos:** Ensure all images and videos are appropriate, respectful, and have necessary permissions. Avoid images that could identify children or vulnerable persons without explicit consent.
- **Political Neutrality:** Official Council accounts must remain politically neutral.



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Do not endorse political parties, candidates, or engage in political campaigning (e.g., by explicitly promoting or disparaging parties/candidates, or using official accounts to share their campaign materials).

- **Council Branding:** Ensure consistent use of official Council branding (e.g., logos, visual identity) on official accounts to maintain a recognisable and professional presence.
- **Record Keeping and FOI:** Be aware that official social media communications may be subject to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and appropriate records should be maintained in line with the Council's data retention policies and legal obligations.
- **Process:** Utilise agreed-upon processes for content creation, approval (if applicable), and scheduling to ensure consistency and accuracy. Requests for content to be posted on official channels should be directed to the Clerk or Authorised Social Media Administrators in the first instance.
- **Emergency Information:** In emergencies, social media can be used to disseminate critical information, but always refer to official emergency services for primary updates.

6.2. Engagement and Interaction

- **Monitoring:** Official accounts will be monitored regularly, typically during standard working hours (e.g. Monday–Thursday), and this may be subject to administrator availability. The Council may also monitor forums and blogs to gain indirect feedback.
- **Response Times:** Aim to respond to legitimate enquiries and comments promptly. The Council may post replies on forums or blogs to answer queries or address factual corrections but would generally take a cautious approach before getting involved in contentious issues.
- **Comments and Moderation:**
 - Moderation is generally reactive. The Council encourages constructive dialogue.
 - Comments posted by individuals on the Council's social media channels are the views of those individuals and do not necessarily represent the views of the Council.
 - Comments that are abusive, discriminatory, defamatory, offensive, spam, or promote illegal activities will be removed.
 - Repeated posting of irrelevant or disruptive comments may result in users being blocked or reported.
 - Moderation will be applied consistently and transparently.



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- **Third-Party Platforms and Liability:** The Council is not responsible for, liable for, nor does it endorse the privacy practices of social media platforms or any linked websites. The use of such platforms and any linked websites is at the user's own risk. The Council assumes no responsibility or liability for any injury, loss, or damage incurred because of any use or reliance upon the information and material contained within or downloaded from these websites [cite: 176].
- **Handling Complaints/Sensitive Issues:** Do not attempt to resolve detailed complaints or sensitive issues via public social media comments. Direct users to appropriate formal channels (e.g. Council email, phone, official complaints procedure).
- **Private Messages:** Respond to private messages in a timely manner, directing users to official contact methods for detailed enquiries.

7. Guidelines for Personal Social Media Use (Councillors, Employees, Volunteers)

While individuals are free to express personal views on their private social media accounts, they must be mindful that their association with Ynysybwl & Coed Y Cwm Community Council may be known or inferred. Therefore, individuals must:

- **Avoid Misrepresentation:** Do not present personal opinions as official Council views.
- **Maintain Professionalism:** Avoid posting content that could bring the Council into disrepute, including discriminatory, offensive, or defamatory remarks. Care should be taken to avoid guesswork, exaggeration, and colourful language.
- **Confidentiality:** Never disclose confidential Council information or personal data obtained through their role.
- **Respect Others:** Be respectful of colleagues, other Councillors, and members of the public.
- **Political Activity:** While Councillors may engage in political activity on personal accounts, they must ensure it is clearly separate from their Council role and does not use Council resources or imply Council endorsement (e.g., by suggesting their personal political views are shared or sanctioned by the Council as a body).
- **Data Protection:** Be cautious about sharing information or images of others without their consent, particularly in a professional context.

8. Breach of Policy & Reporting Concerns

Any breach of this Social Media Policy may result in disciplinary action for employees and volunteers, and may be reported to the relevant authorities if it involves illegal



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activity. For Councillors, breaches may be referred to the Council's Monitoring Officer or relevant standards committee. Any employee, Councillor, or member of the public who becomes aware of social networking activity related to the Council that they deem inappropriate or in breach of this policy should make the Clerk aware as soon as possible.

9. Purdah (Pre-Election Period) In the period leading up to an election (local, general, or other polls) – often referred to as Purdah – specific restrictions on communications apply to local authorities to ensure political impartiality.

- During Purdah, the Council will be particularly cautious in its social media activity to ensure it does not publish anything that could be seen as supporting any political party or candidate.
- Essential service announcements and factual information will continue to be published as necessary.
- Increased monitoring of comments on Council social media channels will occur, and any responses or comments that are overtly party political or attempt to use Council platforms for electioneering may need to be removed or hidden.

10. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed by Ynysybwl & Coed Y Cwm Community Council annually, or sooner if there are changes in legislation, social media platforms, or Council practice. Last Reviewed: 29 May 2025 Next Review Due: May 2026