

Chelford Parish Council Social Media Policy

(adopted 14th October 2021, last reviewed 8th May 2025)

Purpose and Benefits of Social Media

Social media provides a platform for Chelford Parish Council to communicate effectively with members of the public. This can be achieved as a two-way process with the Council seeking to keep residents informed in addition to providing a channel through which the public can report issues and direct questions to the Council.

Access to Council Social Media Accounts

The administration team, comprising of no less than two Members, must be appointed by full Council. The administration team will have access to the Council's social media accounts to configure accounts and post content.

The administration team must not share login credentials or grant further access without the agreement of full Council.

A register of all social media accounts that are in Chelford Parish Council's name (Council Social Media Accounts) shall be held by the Clerk. No accounts should be created in Chelford Parish Council's name without the agreement of full Council. Every account held in the name of the Council shall be accessible to all members of the administration team.

Where an individual with access to a Council social media account should no longer have access (e.g. where an individual leaves the Council), the administration team shall ensure that the user's access is revoked prior to the individual leaving. Where necessary any shared passwords must be changed in advance of the individual leaving.

The administration team shall take all reasonable measures to ensure the outgoing member of the administration team is no longer able to access any Chelford Parish Council social media account.

In the event that an account is not controlled by the administration team, including a fake or satirical account, the administration team will make reasonable efforts to have such accounts suspended or deleted.

The administration team must monitor and review content of all social media accounts at least once per week.

Posting with Council Social Media Accounts

When using social media Councillors and Council staff must be mindful of the information they post in both a personal and Council capacity and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative.

Online content should be accurate, objective, balanced and informative.

Councillors and Council staff must not:

- Hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms
- Present personal opinions as that of the Parish Council
- Present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to the Council
- Post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the Council
- Post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks
- Engage in personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications
- Use an individual's name unless given written permission to do so
- Publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
- Post any information that infringes copyright of others
- Post any information that may be deemed libel
- Post online activity that constitutes bullying or harassment
- Bring the Parish Council into disrepute, including through content posted in a personal capacity
- Post offensive language relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief
- Conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence

Social media may be used to:

- Distribute agendas, post minutes and dates of meetings
- Advertise events and activities
- Promote good news stories with a linked website or press page
- Advertise job vacancies
- Share information from partner agencies such as Cheshire East Council, Police, Library, Health etc.
- Announce new information
- Post or share information from other Parish Council related community groups such as schools, sports clubs, community groups and charities
- Share any other information that is relevant to the community

Inappropriate Content

The administration team will not consider any draft posts to any Council Social Media Account which may negatively impact the Council, its staff, contractors or members.

This non-exhaustive list includes any of the following:

- Content which could be considered libellous or defamatory.
- Content, which is false, misleading or intended to deceive followers.
- Obscene, sexual or violent content.
- Offensive or discriminatory content.
- Content which promotes illegal activity.
- Bullying.
- Inappropriate contact with minors.
- Engaging in controversial or political debate.

Chelford Parish Council should not be seen to endorse any inappropriate, offensive or controversial views posted by other social media users. If a member of the public has posted anything which is grossly offensive or illegal on a Council social media property, this will be removed as soon as possible to limit damage to the reputation of the Council and to limit any offence that may be caused.

When members of the public post inappropriate content to a Council page, the individual account may be blocked. Chelford Parish Council may also refer this content to the police or relevant authorities if there is any suspicion of criminal activity, including grooming, hate crime or bullying.

Mitigating risks

The following list is not exhaustive, however, highlights practical ways to mitigate common risks.

Criticism regarding the use of public funds, time and resources

Policy mitigation: The administration team must ensure that all information posted is relevant to the work of Chelford Parish Council or to the residents of the Parish. The administration team should treat all Council social media accounts as a means to communicating with the public as customers and not for socialising.

Sharing and security of passwords

Policy mitigation: The administration team must not share the login details for Council social media accounts with any unauthorised individual. Devices used to administer Council social media accounts must be password protected to minimise the risk of unauthorised posts.

Damage to the reputation of Chelford Parish Council

Policy mitigation: The administration team must ensure that all information posted is relevant and non-controversial. No offensive or inappropriate content should be posted or shared, and any such content should be removed as soon as it has been seen. The administration team must inform the Clerk whenever action is required to limit damage already done to the reputation of the Parish Council.

Sharing and misuse of confidential information relating to Members of the Council, employees of the Council or members of the public

Policy mitigation: All employees and councillors are under a general requirement to maintain the confidentiality of information. The administration team must make every effort to ensure that the confidentiality of information is maintained appropriately when drafting messages for Council social media accounts and should be aware that content which is published through social media cannot be permanently removed from the public domain even when deleted. Any private, confidential or sensitive information should not be posted or shared via the Council's social media accounts. This type of information should also not be shared through the instant messaging functions provided by social media sites, as these messages are not secure and can be easily shared.