PINEWOOD

PARISH COUNCIL

COMMUNICATIONS, WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY 2026

Policy Statement

Pinewood Parish Council recognises the importance of clear, professional, accurate and timely communication with residents, stakeholders, community groups, hall users and members of the public.

Purpose

The Council aims to:

- Promote openness and transparency.
- Provide accurate and accessible information.
- Encourage positive community engagement.
- Protect the Council's reputation.
- Ensure legal compliance in all communications.
- Maintain professional standards across all communication channels.

This policy covers all official communications, including printed materials, email, websites and social media platforms.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Parish Councillors.
- Parish Council employees.
- Volunteers acting on behalf of the Council.
- Contractors authorised to manage communications.
- Any other authorised representatives.

It covers:

- Council correspondence.
- Website content.
- Social media accounts.
- Public notices.
- Press releases.
- Newsletters.
- Electronic and digital communications.

Principles of Communication

All official communications should be:

Accurate

Information must be factually correct and regularly reviewed.

Clear

Information should be written in plain English, avoiding unnecessary jargon.

Professional

Communications must be courteous, impartial and respectful.

Timely

Information should be published within appropriate timescales.

Accessible

The Council will make reasonable efforts to ensure communications are accessible to all members of the community.

Lawful

All communications must comply with relevant legislation, including:

- Data Protection Act 2018.
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).
- Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- Copyright and intellectual property legislation.

- Equality Act 2010.
- Local Government legislation and codes of conduct.

Official Council Communications
Official communications may be issued through:
- The Parish Council website.
- Noticeboards.
- Email correspondence.
- Newsletters.
- Social media platforms.
- Press releases.
- Community Hall publicity materials.

Responsibilities
The Parish Clerk shall act as the primary point of contact for official communications regarding the Parish Council. Any concerns are directed to the Chair of the Parish Council and discussed at the next Parish Council meeting.

The Hall & Events Co-ordinator shall act as the primary point of contact for official communications regarding the Pinewood Community Hall. Any concerns are directed to the Chair of the Community Hall Management Committee and discussed at the next Community Hall Management Committee meeting.

Media Relations
Media enquiries should normally be directed to:
- The Parish Clerk or The Chair of the Parish Council
- For Community Hall events; The Hall & Events Co-ordinator shall direct to the Community Hall Management Committee for approval.

When dealing with the media:
- Information provided must be accurate and approved where necessary.
- Personal opinions must not be presented as Council policy.
- Confidential information must not be disclosed.
- Ongoing legal, employment or confidential matters must not be discussed publicly.

Press releases should be approved by the Parish Council or Community Hall Management Committee where appropriate.

Website Policy

Purpose of the Website
The Parish Council website is intended to:
- Provide information about Council services and activities.
- Publish statutory information.
- Promote Community Hall activities.
- Support transparency and accountability.
- Provide contact details and meeting information.

Website Content
The Council website may include:
- Agendas and minutes.
- Policies and procedures.

- News and announcements.
- Financial information.
- Community Hall information.
- Event notices.
- Contact information.
- Transparency information required by law.

Content should be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains accurate and up to date.

Website Management
The Parish Clerk and Hall & Events Co-ordinator shall be responsible for:

- Managing their own website content.
- Reviewing published information.
- Ensuring data protection compliance.
- Removing outdated information where appropriate.
- Maintaining website security.

Accessibility
The Parish Council will seek to make website content accessible to all users and will work to meet relevant accessibility standards where reasonably practicable.

Social Media Policy

Purpose of Social Media
The Council may use social media platforms to:

- Promote Community Hall activities.
- Notify residents of events.
- Engage with the local community.
- Signpost users to official Council information.

Official Accounts
Only authorised social media accounts shall represent the Council.
Account login credentials must be:

- Kept secure.
- Accessible only to authorised administrators (Clerk & Hall & Events Co-ordinator)
- Updated when personnel change.

Content Standards
Content published on official accounts must:

- Be accurate and lawful.
- Be professional and respectful.
- Not contain offensive, discriminatory or inflammatory material.
- Not disclose confidential information.
- Not breach copyright.
- Not contain political campaigning material.

Community Hall Promotion
Official social media channels may be used to:

- Advertise hall events.
- Promote community activities.
- Share booking information.
- Highlight community achievements.

Posts should remain factual and non-partisan

Monitoring and Moderation
The Parish Council reserves the right to:

- Remove inappropriate comments from Council-managed platforms.
- Hide or report abusive content.
- Block users who repeatedly breach acceptable standards.

Examples of unacceptable content include:

- Abusive or threatening language.
- Hate speech.
- Harassment or bullying.
- Defamatory statements.
- Spam or commercial advertising.
- Illegal content.
- False or misleading information.

Public Engagement
The Council welcomes constructive comments and feedback but cannot guarantee individual responses to all posts or messages.
Social media should not be used for:

- Formal complaints.
- Emergency reporting.
- Freedom of Information requests.
- Reporting urgent health and safety issues.

Alternative contact methods should be clearly signposted.

Councillors' Personal Social Media Accounts
Councillors are entitled to maintain personal social media accounts.
However, when using personal accounts they should:

- Make clear when they are expressing personal opinions.
- Avoid implying they speak on behalf of the Council unless authorised.
- Maintain the standards expected under the Councillor Code of Conduct.
- Treat others with respect.
- Avoid posting information that could damage the Council's reputation.

Councillors must not disclose confidential Council information on personal platforms.

Employees and Volunteers
Employees and volunteers must:

- Use social media responsibly.
- Protect confidential information.
- Avoid comments that could damage public confidence in the Council.
- Follow all Council policies relating to conduct and data protection.

Data Protection and Privacy
All communications must comply with data protection requirements.
Personal information must:

- Be processed lawfully and fairly.
- Be kept secure.
- Only be shared where authorised and lawful.
- Be removed when no longer required.

Photographs or videos of identifiable individuals should only be used where appropriate permissions have been obtained or another lawful basis applies.

Photography and Publicity
The Council may use photographs and video recordings to promote events and community activities. Where appropriate:

- Consent will be obtained.
- Individuals will be informed how images may be used.
- Images will be stored securely.
- Requests for removal will be considered in accordance with data protection requirements.

Special care should be taken regarding images of children and vulnerable individuals.

Complaints
Any concerns regarding Council communications, website content or social media activity should be submitted through the Parish Council's complaints procedure.
Complaints will be investigated fairly and in accordance with Council procedures.

Security
The Council will take reasonable steps to protect its digital communication systems through:

- Strong passwords.
- Limited administrator access.
- Secure storage of login details.
- Regular software updates.
- Website security monitoring.

Any suspected breach or cyber incident should be reported immediately to the Parish Clerk.

Monitoring and Review
This policy will be reviewed every two years, unless:

- Significant legislative changes.
- Following major communication or data protection incidents.
- When new communication technologies are adopted.

This policy was approved by the Community Hall Management Committee on 28 July 2026

This policy was adopted by Pinewood Parish Council on 8 September 2026
Review date: September 2028