

MALVERN TOWN COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Reviewed by:	Policy and Resources Committee – 6 May 2026
Agreed:	Annual Council – 13 May 2026
Next review due:	May 2030

Malvern Town Council



Social Media Policy

1. Purpose & Objectives

The purpose of this Social Media Policy is to establish a clear framework for the effective, consistent and responsible use of social media by Malvern Town Council.

Social media is one of the key channels of communication that the community can use to contact the Town Council and that the Council can use to contact the community. Ensuring that these channels are streamlined and working together at their fullest is vital for Malvern Town Council to share key information with the community.

This policy aims to:

- Define the role of social media in supporting organisational objectives
- Ensure all social media activity aligns with council aims and objectives and communication strategies
- Promote transparency, accountability and community engagement
- Provide guidance to staff and elected members on the appropriate use and management of social media
- Guide staff and councillor behaviour when interacting with members of public on their personal social media with regard to council business
- Mitigate risks associated with digital communications

1.1 Objectives

Malvern Town Council have a set of social media objectives that they are working towards as part of this policy and strategy:

- Deliver high quality communications that recognise the different communities and what they need from Malvern Town Council
- Identify key communication opportunities that take advantage of spreading key messages to the wider community
- Develop a clear understanding and implement the tools and voices available
- Support council staff and elected members with the tools to act as advocates for Malvern Town Council while creating a better understanding of how these platforms work

- Use social media to support Malvern Town Councils digital journey (see appendix 1 for details regarding digital journeys) through all our digital platforms whilst providing a clear and consistent message.
- Increase the transparency and trust with the community in how information is shared whilst promoting services, events and initiatives in a timely update to encourage increased engagement.

1.2 Risks

What are the risks?

The following risks are identified with the use of social media:

- Damage to the Council's reputation
- Civil or criminal action relating to breaches of legislation
- Disclosure of confidential information/breach of safeguarding through use of images or personal data
- Virus or other malware (malicious software) infection/social engineering attacks (sometimes known as 'phishing')
- Potential effect on ICT network performance
- Bullying or witch-hunting
- Lost productivity as a result of personal use of social media during work time

2. Scope

This policy applies to all official social media accounts operated by Malvern Town Council as well as employees, contractors and elected members who contribute to or manage these accounts. It also provides guidance for staff and elected members using personal social media where their role within Malvern Town Council may be identifiable.

This policy covers content creation and publishing, account management, engagement with the public and the conduct of staff/elected members online.

3. Target Audience

Our social media content and channels are designed to reach local residents, businesses and employers, visitors and tourists, community and voluntary groups and partner organisations and stakeholders.

The Council aims to ensure that content is relevant to local and organisational need, is easily understandable and accessible to all that view it including those with disabilities.

4. Platforms and Channels

Malvern Town Council maintains a presence using the following channels and accounts:

- **Facebook Business Account (Malvern Town Council)**
- **Facebook Personal Account (Malvern T Council)**
- **X Account (@malvern_town)**
- **Instagram Account (@malverntowncouncil)**
- **YouTube Account (Malvern Town Council)**

Malvern Town Council use each of the platforms stated above for the following ideology:

- Facebook – Community updates, service information, event promotion & highlights, behind the scenes content
- Instagram – Visual storytelling, community highlights, events, community updates, behind the scenes content
- X – real-time updates, emergency communications, event highlights
- YouTube – video content, highlighting events, digital events, behind the scenes content

Each platform has a defined purpose and audience with content being tailored specifically to this ideology. Any new platforms will only be introduced following council process and approval.

The Communications Officer will be responsible for reviewing social media platforms yearly with inactive and low-performing channels being proposed to close with feedback given to the Town Clerk and Council.

5. Content Strategy

5.1 Content Pillars

Malvern Town Council adopts a 3-pillar approach to communicating on social media which directly links to each platform's algorithm (please see appendix 2 for explanation of algorithms):

- **Pillar 1 – Problem Awareness;** Names the frustration your audience already feels and provides them an answer
Example content: Educational content around which council does what, who do I call for X service, emergency closures and opening.
- **Pillar 2 – Solution Awareness;** Explains frameworks, case studies and how this works
Example Content: Grant case studies, community engagement awareness days, operations updates.
- **Pillar 3 – Offer Awareness;** Invites people into specific next steps
Example Content: promotion of events: tickets on website, competitions, event highlights.

5.2 Tone of voice

Malvern Town Council's tone of voice should be represented across all platforms and content via the organisational channels. All content should be:

- Clear and Jargon-free
- Professional yet approachable
- Respectful and inclusive
- Consistent with organisational values and objectives

Tone of voice also applies to staff and elected members in their recognisable roles at Malvern Town Council.

5.3 Accessibility

We are committed to accessible communication via our social media channels by:

- Using plain English
- Providing alt text for images
- Including captions/subtitles on videos
- Avoiding excessive use of emojis or complex formatting

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The Town Clerk is responsible for overseeing strategy, governance and performance markers.

The Town Clerk and Operations Manager are responsible for the approval of sensitive or high-risk communications.

The Events and Communications Officer is responsible for developing, producing and scheduling content to ensure that it meets brand and accessibility standards.

The Events and Communications Officer and Office Admin Officer are responsible for monitoring channels and responding to enquiries and comments as well as escalating issues where necessary.

7. Posting Guidelines

- **Frequency:** Content should be posted regularly to maintain engagement with audiences however this frequency will vary by platform.
- **Best Practices:** Ensuring that all information is accurate and up to date using high quality visuals to illustrate the message.
- **Being consistent:** this includes having a consistent tone of voice and visual branding, including events, council meetings and general information.
- **Tone of Voice:** Ensuring that all messages are kept concise and focused on the main message of the content and include clear calls to action where appropriate.
- **Tailoring content to new and existing audiences:** Prior to July 2024 the content for the social media was more based on having a presence without using the platforms effectively. From May 2026 each platform will have different tailor-made content to benefit the current audience while adapting further content to engage missed audiences. This is a process that will take place over time with results showing in due course.
- **Purpose and aim:** Each platform having a specific purpose and set of content this will then allow Malvern Town Council to reach a wider audience and tailor content.
- **Accessibility Compliance:** All posts must adhere to accessibility standard including descriptive alt text, readable font styles in graphics including colours and subtitled video content.

8. Community Management and Engagement

- **Response Times:** Aim to respond within 72hrs (Monday – Friday) with emergency responses being prioritised outside normal hours.
- **Engagement Principles:** Be polite, helpful and professional to all messages and comments, acknowledge feedback that is both positive and negative and provide clear and accurate information.

9. Moderation Policy

Malvern Town Council is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful and inclusive environment across all social media channels. We welcome open discussion and constructive feedback; however, we reserve the right to moderate content to protect staff, residents and the wider community.

9.1 Unacceptable Content

The organisation may remove, hide, or report content that includes

- Offensive, abusive or discriminatory language
- Hate speech or content targeting individuals or groups
- Harassment, intimidation, or personal attacks
- Promotion of misinformation that could cause harm or public confusion
- Spam, promotional, or irrelevant content
- Content that breaches confidentiality or GDPR
- Repeated posting of the same message also known as flooding

9.2 Blocking Policy

In certain circumstances, the organisation may block or restrict users from interacting with its social media channel. This action is taken to protect the safety, wellbeing and integrity of our online spaces

Reasons for blocking:

A user may be blocked where they:

- Repeatedly post abusive, offensive or discriminatory content
- Engage in harassment or target attacks towards staff, councillors or other users
- Persistently spread harmful misinformation after correction
- Share content that is unlawful or incites illegal activity
- Repeatedly ignore moderation warnings or guidelines
- Engage in spam, scams, or malicious activity
- Attempt to compromise the security or operation of our channel

9.3 Process for Blocking:

Where appropriate, the organisation will take a proportionate approach:

1. First Instance: Content may be removed and/or the user issued a warning
2. Repeated Behaviour: Temporary restriction or muting may be applied
3. Serious or Ongoing Breaches: The user may be permanently blocked

In cases involving serious threats, hate speech or illegal activity, immediate blocking may occur without prior warning.

9.4 Transparency & Accountability:

- Decisions to block users will be made by the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk and communicated to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor
- A record of blocked users and the reasons for action will be maintained
- Users may contact the organisation through alternative channels if they believe they have been unfairly blocked

9.5 Appeals:

Users who have been blocked may request a review of the decision by contacting the Town Clerk via townclerk@malvern-tc.org.uk. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

9.6 Safeguarding Staff:

We have a duty of care to protect staff managing social media channels. Any behaviour that causes distress, alarm or harm to staff will be taken seriously and may result in immediate blocking and further action if required.

10. Crisis Communications

In the event of an emergency (e.g. severe weather, public safety incidents):

- Social media will be used to provide timely updates
- Information must be verified before publication
- Messaging must align with emergency services and partners
- Updates will be issued regularly to keep the public informed

10.1 Escalation Process

All crisis communications must be approved by the Town Clerk, Operations Manager and Events and Communications Officer and a central log of updates will be maintained for each incident.

11. Legal & Compliance

All social media activity must comply with:

- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act
- Copyright and intellectual property laws
- Equality and accessibility legislation

11.1 Data Protection

- Personal data must not be shared publicly
- Sensitive enquiries should be handled privately

11.2 Copyright

- Only use images, videos, and content with appropriate permissions

12. Employee and Elected Members use of Social Media

Malvern Town Council have a variety of staff and volunteers who may use social media for personal use. It is important both staff and elected members should:

- Maintain professionalism online
- Avoid sharing confidential or sensitive information regarding the council and council business
- Make it clear when expressing personal opinions that this is their view as an individual and that this could not reasonably be seen as representing the Town Council.

Employees and elected members must not:

- Represent personal views as those of the organisation
- Engage in behaviour that could damage or defame the organisation's reputation

13. Security & Account Management

- Access to accounts is restricted to authorised personnel
- Strong passwords and two-factor authentication are required
- Accounts should be managed using secure systems and in line with the IT Users Policy

13.1 Incident Management

- Any suspected breach must be reported immediately

- Access should be revoked when staff leave or change roles

14. Monitoring and Analytics

Malvern Town Council is committed to monitoring and improving its social media channels to align with both industry trends and community needs. Monitoring will take place every 3 months and will be uploaded into a main bank of data looking into the following areas:

- Engagement rates (likes, comments, shares)
- Reach and impressions (how many accounts we have hit)
- Follower growth
- Visits to our social media channels

15. Review and Governance

This policy will be reviewed once per council term or as required and will be updated in line with legislation, algorithm or platform changes.

Responsibility for this policy sits with the Policy and Resources Committee.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Digital journey

A digital journey is the series of interactions a customer/user has with a brand through their digital channels to achieve the desired outcome i.e making a sale, finding information, booking an event. This can be done through websites, social media or mobile app. The goal of a digital journey is to simplify the process for the user and improve their experience.

Malvern Town Council's audience can be broken down into 3 main categories in regard to a digital journey:

- **Information Gatherers** – this user is using our digital platforms for a specific purpose to find information or gather a particular service. These users are direct and want to find information quickly.
- **Events Attendants** – these users are looking for local events in which they either want to support or attend. This group of users will be made up of small business owners, local communities and general public.
- **General Users** – these users might have found us indirectly from suggested content on social media or via google search they aren't looking for anything specific. They are just more seeing what we do and how we do it.

SEO (search engine optimisation) is becoming one of the biggest pushes that is changing social media and how organisations like Malvern Town Council make content. By making content and captions that are SEO friendly and in turn making content findable via a search engine changes how people could find content. Platforms are wanting users to use strategic keywords that are search engine friendly (example – Local Government, Malvern Hills) making digital journeys even shorter and changing how users find and engage directly with content.

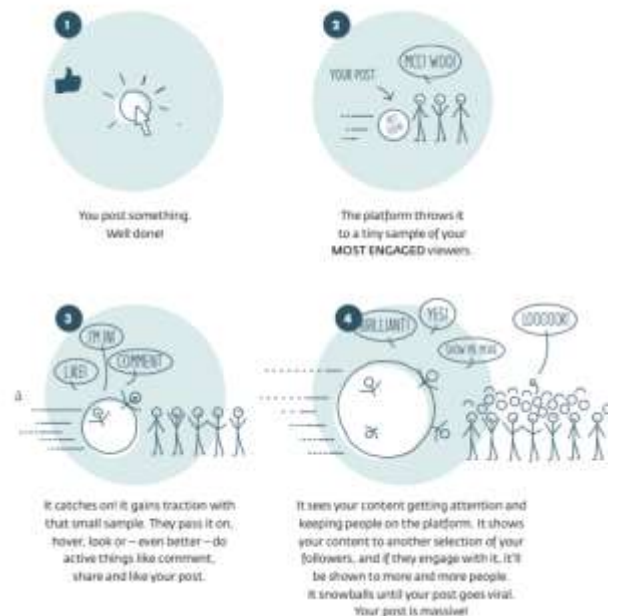
Appendix 2 – Algorithm

Social media algorithms exist to funnel certain kinds of content to specific audiences, encouraging people to spend more time on their platforms viewing the content that they want to see.

Algorithms help decide which pieces of content rank higher than others on specific platforms as it matches the content to its suggested audience. This ranking doesn't use follower counts as a matrix went deciding on how content is shared it based upon how users have previously engaged with an organisations content through likes, comments and shares and whether that user has engaged previously with similar types of content encouraging the algorithm to show them more of that style. There are many other factors that the algorithm will look at including dates, times, style of content and active users when deciding how and why to push out content.



Algorithms working in a not so good way



Algorithms working in a good way

Appendix 3 – Example Response Templates

“Thank you contacting Malvern Town Council – we’re looking into this and will update you shortly”

“Please send us a direct message with your details so we can assist further, thanks, Malvern Town Council”

Appendix 4 – Crisis Checklist

- Confirm facts – What is the situation, who is involved, confirm external partners
- Confirm severity – What level is this crisis?
- Seek approval – speak to Town Clerk and Operation Manager
- Publish initial update
- Monitor responses – positive/negative (look out for unacceptable content – refer to 9.1)
- Provide regular updates