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| Media, Social Media and Recording of Meetings  Policy Document – Version 1.2 | | |
| Thurcroft Parish Council | Adopted on 26/06/2025  Min Reference: FC148 | Review Date: 26/06/2026  (Annual) |

# Introduction

1. Thurcroft Parish Council (“the Council”) is committed to the provision of accurate information about its governance, decisions, and activities. Where this information is not available via the Council’s publication scheme, please contact the Council’s clerk or, in their absence, the chairman of the Parish Council.
2. The Council shall, where possible, co‐operate with those whose work involves gathering material for publication in any form including use of the internet (“the media”).
3. This policy explains how the Council may work with the media to meet the above objectives in accordance with the legal requirements and restrictions that apply. It sets out the framework for Councillors, officers/employees to follow in contacting the media and informing the public about the local Council’s activities, the decisions it makes and the services it provides.
4. This policy also explains how Thurcroft Parish Council intends to use social media to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within the Thurcroft Parish. The policy provides guidance to both Councillors and public on social media in line with the council’s ethos of civility and respect.
5. Effective media relations are an important factor in maintaining a good relationship between the Thurcroft Parish Council and the local community. Since members of the public generally rely on the media for local information and news, It is important for the local Council to present information about its activities and aspirations in a consistent way.
6. The community in this sense includes all residents and elected representatives, businesses, schools, shops, places of worship, statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, groups and associations.

# Legal requirements and restrictions

1. This policy is subject to the Council’s obligations which are set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1986, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation 2018, other legislation which may apply and the Council’s standing orders and financial regulations. The Council’s financial regulations and relevant standing orders referenced in this policy are available via the Council’s Publication Scheme.
2. The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information the disclosure of which is prohibited by law. The Council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the Council’s adopted standing orders, under contract or by common law. Councillors are subject to additional restrictions about the disclosure of confidential information which arise from the code of conduct adopted by the Council, a copy of which is available via the Council’s publication scheme.

# Media communications

1. “The Media” is more than the local newspaper. The phrase encompasses many different means of communicating a message to a wide audience and includes:
   * + Broadcast Media (radio and Television)
     + Internet (website and social media)
     + Printed media (newspapers, community newspapers, magazines, leaflets, and the Council’s Annual Report)
     + Council Agendas and Displaying information on Council noticeboards.

# Meetings and recording of meetings

The right to record, film and to broadcast meetings of the Parish Council is established under the Openness of Local Government Regulations 2014. This is an addition to the rights of the press and public to attend such meetings. Those undertaking these activities will be deemed to have accepted this policy and its requirements, whether they have read them or not.

Those who attend a public meeting should expect to be filmed. This includes councillors, council officers and members of the public, except those identified in paragraph 12.

1. A meeting of the Council and its committees is open to the public unless the meeting resolves to exclude them because their presence at the meeting is prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business or other special reason(s) stated in the resolution. In accordance with the Council’s adopted standing orders, people may be required to leave a meeting of the Council and its committees, if their disorderly behaviour obstructs the business of the meeting.
2. Where a meeting of the Council and its committees include an opportunity for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the Council’s standing orders. The Chair of Council will manage the public participation period. The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a meeting of the Council and its committees (which includes e.g. using a mobile phone or tablet, recording for a TV/radio broadcast, providing commentary on blogs, web forums, or social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) which enable a person not at the meeting to see, hear or be given commentary about the meeting is permitted unless:
   1. the meeting has resolved to hold all or part of the meeting without the public present, or
   2. such activities disrupt the proceedings, or
   3. paragraphs 12 and 13 below apply.

The council requests that the recordings of any meeting or committee are overt (i.e. clearly visible to anyone at the meeting).

1. The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a child under the age of 18 or vulnerable adult at a Council or committee meeting is not permitted unless an adult responsible for them has given written permission.
2. Oral reporting or commentary about a Council or committee meeting by a person who is present at the meeting is not permitted. Anyone making a recording has no right to interrupt a Council meeting by asking questions or comments for the recording. The person recording has no right to ask councillors, officers or members of the public to repeat a statement for the purposes of the recording.
3. Any person wishing to record a meeting in any format whatsoever is encouraged to contact the Clerk prior to the start of the meeting. Discussing requirements with the Clerk beforehand will help to ensure that the Council provides reasonable facilities to meet the needs of the person that is recording. The Council shall, as far as it is practicable, provide reasonable facilities for anyone taking a report of a Council or committee meeting and for telephoning their report at their own expense. Persons recording are requested not to leave their equipment unattended and are responsible for their equipment at all times.
4. The Chairman of the meeting has absolute discretion to stop or suspend recording if, in his/her reasonable opinion, continuing to record would prejudice proceedings at the meeting or if the person recording is in breach of this policy.
5. The recording of Council meetings is subject to the law and it is the responsibility of those doing so to ensure compliance. This will include the Human Rights Act, Data Protection Act and the laws of libel and information.
6. The Council expects that the recording will not be edited in a way that could lead to the misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the proceedings, infringement of the Council’s values or in a way that ridicules or shows a lack of respect for those in the recording. The Council would expect that any recording in breach of these rules be removed from public view. The council will have no liability for material published by any other person unless it is itself undertaking the publication through the Parish Office.
7. The minutes of a Council meeting remain the statutory and legally binding formal record of Council decisions.
8. The Council is not liable for the actions of any person making a recording at a Council meeting which identifies a member of the public or for any publication of that recording.
9. The Council’s standing orders will confirm if attendance by the public, their participation, photographing, recording, filming or other reporting is permitted at a meeting of a sub‐committee.
10. The Council itself may photograph, film, record or broadcast meetings and can retain, use or dispose of such material in accordance with its retention and disposal policies. Where a Council proposes to record all its own meetings it will be bound by this policy.

# Other communications with the media

1. This policy does not seek to regulate Councillors in their private capacity.
2. The Council’s communications with the media seek to represent the corporate position and views of the Council. If the views of Councillors are different to the Council’s corporate position and views, they will make this clear.
3. The Council’s Clerk, or in their absence, the Chairman may contact the media if the Council wants to provide information, a statement or other material about the Council. The clerk is not authorised to speculate on matters that have not been considered by the Council.
4. When such questions are put to the clerk, they should inform the enquirer that they will be notified of a response within 10 working days, where practical. The clerk should then consult with the chair or vice chair in their absence, on a suitable response, which may be “no comment”.
5. Councillors should take great care not to misrepresent and/or bring the Council into disrepute and must bear in mind their responsibilities under the Council’s Code of Conduct.
6. Subject to the obligations on Councillors not to disclose information referred to in paragraph 8 above and not to misrepresent the Council’s position, Councillors are free to communicate their position and views, and must make it clear that they are their own personal views and that they are not representing the views of the local Council.

# Monitoring

1. It is important to monitor the media for items (reports, articles, and letters) about the Council in order to know:
   1. Whether press releases and statements issued by the Council are picked up and used effectively.
   2. What the community is saying about the Council.
2. Councillors and Officers/Employees are encouraged to look out for items referring to the Council in all media and to inform the clerk. Wherever possible supply original press cuttings rather than photocopies to the clerk.

# Councillor access to Parish social media pages

1. Councillors will be granted access to the Facebook page to view posts and monitor activity. However, **any posts and comments by councillors must be approved by the Clerk** before being posted publicly. This ensures consistency in messaging and adherence to the Council’s policies. Councillors are encouraged to share relevant information but must refrain from making political or personal statements. Councillors are not encouraged to respond to comments on social media.

# Engaging with the council on social media

1. The council encourages members of the public, local organisations and community groups, members of the press, local Councillors and others in our wider community to follow and engage with the council through social media accounts.
2. We also encourage everyone in our community to share content from our corporate social media accounts with their own social media networks. This is especially important, for example, during emergency situations or where sharing timely information is essential.
3. Where Councillors utilise a personal social media account, they should make clear they are not acting in their capacity as a Councillor, or speaking on behalf of the Parish Council, without prior agreement.
4. Individuals and organisations are responsible for the content that they choose to post to their social media accounts. This includes content created by others that individuals or organisations choose to repost, retweet or share.
5. Sending a message/post via Facebook will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and we will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through the Facebook channel. Instead, please see our contact details on [www.thurcroftparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.thurcroftparishcouncil.gov.uk/).

# Management policy for posted comments

1. All comments, once posted, become the property of Thurcroft Parish Council and we reserve the right to reproduce, distribute, publish, display, or edit. Derivative work can also be created from such postings or content, and used for any purpose, in any form and on any other media.
2. Thurcroft Parish Council are not responsible, liable for and do not endorse the privacy practices of Facebook or any linked websites. Your use of Facebook and any linked websites is at your own risk.
3. Thurcroft Parish Council assumes no responsibility or liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred as a result of any use or reliance upon the information and material contained within or downloaded from these websites.
4. The presence of any advertisement on Facebook is not an endorsement of the authenticity or quality of the goods, services or website and Thurcroft Parish Council will not be held responsible for any claims arising in that respect.
5. We will not engage in/with, and we discourage posts or comments on, issues of a political nature.
6. Comments should not advertise commercial products or services.
7. This comment policy may be revised at any time. By choosing to comment and/or utilise any Thurcroft Parish Council Social Media site, users are deemed to agree to this policy.

# Conduct on social media

1. The Council will treat everyone with courtesy and respect on its social media channels, and we therefore ask for the same in return from those who choose to engage with us.
2. We ask that council staff and Councillors are treated courteously. Council staff and Councillors should never be subjected to bullying or other forms of abuse or harassment.
3. Council staff and Councillors have the right to carry out their civic duties and work without fear of being attacked or abused. Any behaviour whether that be verbal, physical or in writing, which causes either Councillors or council staff to feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or threatened, is unacceptable.

# Reporting a civility and respect-related issue

1. Council staff and others operating the Council’s social media accounts will at all times be mindful of the council's relevant policies, procedures and processes, including the Code of Conduct.
2. The council will record and report abuse directed at the Council. The Council may, for example, create screenshots of comments and keep a record of abusive or threatening communications, and may take further action as appropriate.
3. Council staff and Councillors should not have to put up with abusive or threatening behaviour. When subjected to such behaviour, the council reserves the right to delete content, block individuals or report individuals to social media platforms when appropriate to do so.
4. The Council may need to report issues of poor conduct directly to social media platforms. For instance, if someone has created a ‘fake account’ or if someone is persistently abusive to the Council.
5. The Council reserves the right to report criminal matters it notices on social media to the Police. For instance, hate crime/speech or threats of violence.
6. Please get in touch with the Council in line with our complaints policy if you feel that a Councillor, member of staff or a user of our social media has failed to act in a civil and respectful way on our social media.