

## **Social media external guidelines**

### **Our use of social media**

At North East Lincolnshire Council we want it to be as easy and convenient as possible to keep in touch with us.

We use our social media presence to keep you informed and engaged about various topics, including but not limited to, local news and information, local events, advice for residents, public consultations, emergency information and job vacancies.

We've produced the following guidelines to make sure it is used safely, efficiently and appropriately to benefit you, our employees, elected members and partners.

The social media platforms we use are Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube, we will always follow the guidelines and rules of each platform.

### **Contacting via social media: sending us private messages**

Our social media is monitored Monday to Friday during normal working hours (excluding Bank Holidays). As we don't monitor these platforms 24/7, we aim to respond to interactions appropriately and efficiently during the working day.

We may not be able to respond to enquiries during the same working day but will always respond as soon as we can and keep you up to date with our progress. We will try to answer all reasonable questions in a timely manner but often need to consult colleagues from different parts of the council and partner organisations. We will stop responding to conversations if we can no longer add value to the discussion. Please be aware that it may not be possible to answer all questions asked.

Anyone can send us a message on our social media platforms; however, interaction must be used for council related conversations, and we don't respond to inappropriate language or comments. If inappropriate language or comments are used and we do not reply, please rephrase your message, we will be happy to continue to have a conversation with you.

Our messages are read and replied to by our staff so please remember to be kind and treat our staff with respect and politeness.

Please take extra care when sharing personal information, such as addresses and telephone numbers. Personal details should NEVER be posted publicly on our social media sites. Please contact us by private message or use email instead.

If your request is urgent or serious, during working hours please contact our customer service team directly on 01472 313131.

## Our house rules

Anyone can comment on our social media platforms, however, there are rules that we ask everyone to follow to keep our community safe.

We'll take immediate action on our accounts and remove any content in any format (such as comments, videos, pictures, gifs, attachments, links, emojis) if it does not adhere to our rules:

- **Don't do anything that breaks the law**
- **Be polite.** Even if you disagree. Name-calling, profanity, fighting words, discriminatory terms, hate crime and hate crime words, sexual harassment, intimidation, bullying, and abusive, threatening, obscene, or defamatory language towards other commenters, our staff, members, partners or anyone else will not be tolerated.
- **Stay on topic.** Keep the conversation relevant to the post and contribute to the discussion. We may remove off-topic content, spam, promotion, or links to third-party sites.
- **Keep it real:** all posts should come from a real person and a real profile (content from fake or anonymous profiles will be deleted and profiles will be blocked).
- **Be civil.** Treat everyone with respect. Debate is welcomed, but our page is not a place for arguments. If you are not being respectful to each other's views, your comments and threads will be removed.
- **Be informed.** Please do not spread false information, or any information that you are not sure of.
- **Take extra care.** Never share your personal or sensitive information such as addresses, phone numbers, bank details etc on social media.
- **Don't spam.** Please don't spam or troll our social media accounts. Repetitive and purposely controversial comments will be removed.
- **Don't promote political activity**

## Action

If your content relates to the list above, we'll hide or delete it depending on the severity. We may contact you to tell you why we've removed it. We then reserve the right to block your profile's access to our social media pages if you continuously publish content that breaks our house rules.

Depending on the content, we also screenshot posts and consider legal action or send them to the police for investigation.

As standard, we do not disable comments from our posts. It's our discretion to disable comments from posts if we think this is the right action to take to protect the public and our employees.

## **Hate crime**

Hate crime is when someone breaks the law by hurting another person because of prejudice or hostility based on (or perceived to be based on) their:

- race
- religion or belief
- disability
- gender identity
- sexual orientation

Hate and harassment can be criminal or non-criminal behaviour and include offensive comments or images on digital channels such as online, social media or text messages.

To find out more about Hate Crime and how to report, visit the [Reporting Crime website](#).

## **Libel**

Please take care not to make libellous statements. In law this means a statement that lowers the reputation of a person or organisation in the eyes of a reasonable person. By publishing such a statement, we can both get into serious trouble. We will therefore take down any statement that could be deemed to be libellous.

## **Allegations against council employees and elected members**

We have a zero-tolerance approach toward fraud and corruption in our organisation. If you make an allegation on our social media accounts against the council, our employees or elected members, we'll ask you to report it along with evidence via our [complaints and compliments webpage](#).

If you make allegations without any evidence that would be deemed slanderous and malicious against our employees and elected members, this may be reported to the police.

## **Safeguarding allegations or disclosures**

If you make any safeguarding allegations or disclosures on our social media pages, these will be passed on to the relevant organisations as part of our duty of care. Please raise these concerns directly to us via our [adult social care webpage](#) and our [concern about a child webpage](#).

If you make any Prevent allegations or disclosures on our social media pages, these will be passed on to the relevant organisations as part of our duty of care. Find out more about reporting a concern on our [Terrorism and Prevent webpage](#).

## **Interaction on Social Media**

We like to engage with our residents, businesses and online communities, but following, liking, commenting or sharing content from another organisation, business or individual does not mean that we endorse them.

## **Feedback**

We welcome feedback and ideas and want you to join the conversation wherever possible and have your say. We read all interactions and will pass suggestions on to the relevant departments.

Feedback, complaints, and compliments can also be submitted on our [complaints, compliments and suggestions webpage](#).

## **Political Restrictions**

We cannot engage on issues of party politics as outlined in [Recommended Code of Practice for Local Authority Publicity](#). During the pre-election period we will be a little quieter on our social media platforms. We will put out a post on our platforms to let you know when we are in the pre-election period. We may turn off commenting on some or all our posts, and we reserve the right to remove comments of a political nature.