

Use of Social Media Policy

1. Introduction

1.1. This policy is to set out the expectations for the responsible use of social media and the internet by members of the Tividale Neighbourhood Board (the Board). Its purpose is to:

- Promote responsible and professional online behaviour
- Protect the reputation of the Board
- Prevent misuse of confidential information
- Provide guidance and support where members experience online abuse

1.2. This policy applies to all Board members when using social media or online platforms whether use is in a professional capacity or personal use.

1.3. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct for board members.

2. What is the definition of social media?

2.1. Social media is the term commonly given to websites, online tools and applications which allow users to interact, often by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interest. Social media involves the building of communities or networks, encouraging participation and engagement.

2.2. Examples include: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, LinkedIn, Yammer, YouTube, Snapchat, blogs and podcasts. This is not an exhaustive list and this policy applies to all current and future social media platforms.

3. Use of social media

3.1. Board members may use social media but must ensure their activity does not negatively affect the Board or its partners. Board members should:

- Avoid posting comments that are or could be considered as offensive, defamatory, discriminatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, hateful, racist, sexist or other inappropriate comments
- Avoid posting content that could damage the reputation of the Board its members, partners or communities it serves
- Not be derogatory or raise grievances about Board and Accountable Body matters
- Not publish or disclose any confidential or information about the Board which is not already in the public arena. Be mindful that whatever is published may be in the public arena for a long time and once posted or published there is less control over it.

- Ensure that permission has been obtained before sharing photographs, videos and other online content and not post content from Board activities or events that could identify individuals without their consent.
- Not imply endorsement of business or organisations without approval
- Use appropriate profile photos

3.2. Great care should be taken when making a comment, post or blog, or 'liking' a post as it has the potential to be widely read/seen and re-distributed. Communications can be misinterpreted, taken out of context and are open to abuse. Any sensitive, emotive or political content could damage reputation whether it was intentional or otherwise.

3.3. Board members may express personal political views on social media but must not promote parties or campaigns in a way that could be seen as representing the Board, or that could damage the Board's reputation.

3.4. Sandwell Council as the Accountable Body reserves the right to regularly review board member personal account activity on social media platforms.

4. Use of social media within the pre-election period

4.1. During local and national election periods, Board members must take particular care when using social media or online platforms.

4.2. Board members should not post, share or comment on content that could be interpreted as the Board supporting or opposing a political party or campaign.

4.3. Board members may express personal political views, however they must ensure these views are clearly their own and are not presented as representing the views of the Board.

4.4. Board members must not use Board information, branding, meetings or activities to support or promote political campaigns.

5. Reporting concerns

5.1. If a board member becomes aware of inappropriate online content relating to the Board, its members, partners or communities, they should report it to the Chair and the Accountable Body (Programme Management Office).

6. Cyberbullying

6.1. Where Board members experience abuse relating to their role, the issue should be reported to the Chair and the Accountable Body (Programme Management Office).

6.2. If board members receive abusive comments, criticism or harassment via social media, it is recommended they:

- Hide or archive abusive comments

- Don't engage if people are abusive or commit harassment.
- Block people who are persistently abusive.
- Use the social media platform's reporting process if they are subjected to abuse, criticism or harassment which breaches the platform's terms and conditions.
- Report this to the Chair of the Board and the Accountable Body (Programme Management Office) if they feel they need support to deal with online harassment or abuse relating to their professional use of social media.

6.3. The Center for Countering Digital Hate has advice and resources on dealing with online hate.

7. Breaches of Policy

7.1. Board members who fail to follow this policy may result in action being taken by the Chair or the Accountable Body, which may include review or removal of Board membership.

8. Policy agreement by the Tividale Neighbourhood Board

8.1. This Policy was agreed and adopted by the Tividale Neighbourhood Board at its meeting on 15 July 2026 under item 4 – Board Terms of Reference.