



Partnership social media policy 2025/26 to 2028/29

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Introduction:

The social media landscape is constantly evolving and for public sector organisations in general, and for the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership in particular, it is essential that we communicate regularly and effectively across a broad range of channels.

In an Ofcom report published in late December 2024, data revealed that seven out of 10 in the UK are using Meta-owned platforms Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. 84 per cent of people in the UK use WhatsApp monthly and 64 per cent use it daily. That makes WhatsApp the most used social/messenger app in the UK.

The same report sees X (formally Twitter) failing to maintain follower count and many organisations – including those in the public sector – are making the decision to stand back from the platform. With this in mind, we no longer post on X but keep our corporate accounts should the social media landscape change.

What is clear is that in order for the Partnership to communicate effectively with its communities, an approach based on data and insights, identifying audiences that use social platforms based on age, preferences, etc. coupled with clear objectives and creativity is key.

This policy sets out how each of our main platforms will operate, how we will produce engaging content focused on our strategic and operational messages using metrics and analytics, how we moderate those channels and how we expect residents and staff to use the channels.

Audit: March 2025

Below is a table for each sovereign council and the Partnership– both corporate channels and sub-channels (channels that are not directly managed by the Partnership Communications Team).

South Holland District Council

Platform	Followers
Facebook	8,700
X	4,300
LinkedIn	3,732
NextDoor	15,031
WhatsApp	304
Instagram – lfgsholland	31
Instagram – wellness4southholland	24
SHDC Communities – Facebook	5,000
SHDC Communities – Instagram	498
SHDC Communities – X	252
Ayscoughfee Hall – Facebook	4,100
Ayscoughfee Hall – Instagram	675
South Holland Centre – Facebook	6,300
South Holland Centre – Instagram	1,123
South Holland Markets	750
TOTAL: 15 Corporate: 7 Sub-channels: 8	TOTAL: 50,820 Corporate: 32,122 Sub-channels: 18,698

Boston Borough Council	
Platform	Followers
Facebook	17,000
X	4,400
LinkedIn	2,278

NextDoor	9,205
WhatsApp	189
Instagram - bostonborough	1,954
Instagram - lfgbostonboroughcouncil	19
Boston Markets	2,900
Boston Guildhall – Facebook	404
Boston Guildhall – Instagram	56
TOTAL: 10 Corporate: 7 Sub-channels 3	TOTAL: 38,424 Corporate: 35,045 Sub-channels 3,379

East Lindsey District Council	
Platform	Followers
Facebook	20,000
X	7,500
LinkedIn	3,250
NextDoor	23,326
WhatsApp	253
Instagram – lfgeastlindsey	67
East Lindsey Markets	616
Story Tellers NPO	111
Love Horncastle	1,900
Love Louth	2,100
Love Alford	1,000
Love Spilsby	1.200

TOTAL: 12 Corporate: 6 Sub-groups: 6	TOTAL: 64,573 Corporate: 57,646 Sub-groups: 6,927
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South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership	
Platform	Followers
X	206
LinkedIn	2,069
South and East Lincolnshire Community Lottery – Facebook	147
Grants4Growth – Facebook	710
TOTAL: 6 Corporate: 3 Sub-groups: 3	TOTAL: 3,176 Corporate: 2,303 Sub-groups: 873

TOTAL NUMBER OF CHANNELS: 43	TOTAL FOLLOWERS: 156,993
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How we will use our channels:

Below are insights from our most popular platforms and how we will start to use these:

Facebook

Each sovereign council has a Facebook page profile and has done so for years. Facebook is our primary channel based on audience data taken from Meta.

South Holland District Council:

8,700 followers

Male: 29% Female 71%

Dominant age: 35-44

Views (no. of times content was played or displayed over 28-day period) 254,580

Boston Borough Council:

17,743 followers

Male: 34% Female 66%

Dominant age: 35-44

Views (no. of times content was played or displayed over 28-day period) 881,594

East Lindsey District Council:

20,054 followers

Male: 28% Female: 72%

Dominant age: 35-44

Views (no. of times content was played or displayed over 28-day period) 605,149

Total average monthly views: **1,741,323.**

Insights:

- Almost one-third of the UK population uses Facebook, with two thirds using Facebook Groups.
- Facebook has moved away from connecting friends and family to focus on algorithms based on user interests.

- Content from Facebook Groups account for 15 per cent of users' timelines.
- Carousels and reels are by far the best content for engagement.
- Artwork, GIFs, stock images, text, and AI images do not get good engagement.

Approach:

- For those local community Groups that accept Corporate Pages such as councils, we will post in these Groups as well as respond to posts that contain factual inaccuracies or questions that can be answered quickly. For more tricky questions, we will post a link to our website (FAQ sections, or email addresses).
- In the event of emergencies such as flooding, cyber-attacks, etc. we will share content from other agencies or our own depending on circumstance.
- Experiment with content that touches on broader topics whilst also retaining a clear focus on our strategic messaging.
- A spread of pictures gets the most engagement, using Reels gets the second.
- If videos are applicable, shoot vertical. Facebook has been pushing this for some time.
- Desist with GIFs, single images, stock images/artwork.
- No AI generated artwork will be used to enhance our content and if anything we share from other agencies includes AI-generated images, we will make sure this is acknowledged.

Facebook

Each sovereign council has a Facebook page profile and has done so for years. Facebook is our primary channel.

South Holland District Council:

3,738 followers

Views (over 28 day period): 308

Impressions (over 28 day period 18 Feb to 18 March 2025) 9,375

Boston Borough Council:

2,305 followers

Views (over 28 day period): 246

Impressions (over 28 day period 18 Feb to 18 March 2025) 11,889

East Lindsey District Council:

3,273 followers

Views (over 28 day period): 293

Impressions (over 28 day period 18 Feb to 18 March 2025) 12,478

South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership:

2,086 followers

Views (over 28 day period): 110

Impressions (over 28 day period 18 Feb to 18 March 2025) 6,632

Total average monthly views: **40,374**

Insights:

- Like Facebook, a carousel of images/pictures is the most effective content in terms of engagement.
- Vertical video is also effective – as is artwork.

- Single pictures, text, links, PDF and reposts with text gets poor engagement.

Approach:

- Encourage staff, Members and our stakeholders/partners to use their own profiles to share corporate messaging to their own networks.
- Encourage staff to contribute to discussions by using corporate content to point to.
- Vertical video is being promoted by the platform, so the more opportunity to create engaging video shot vertical, the better for engagement.
- Posting jobs on main posts get really low engagement. Instead, jobs should be posted on LinkedIn's own jobs stream.
- Good quality content is about celebrating organisation's success stories and hearing those stories through human eyes.
- No AI generated artwork will be used to enhance our content and if anything we share from other agencies includes AI-generated images, we will make sure this is acknowledged.

X (formally Twitter)

East Lindsey District Council: (six-month stats from September 2024 to February 2025)

- Followers – 7,513
- Posts published – 27
- Posts by other accounts reposted - 10
- Total likes – 22
- Total reposts – 13
- Total comments – 6

- **Total views – 9,470**

South Holland District Council: (six-month stats from September 2024 to February 2025)

- Followers – 4,390
- Posts published – 18
- Posts by other accounts reposted - 11
- Total likes – 3
- Total reposts – 2
- Total comments – 0
- **Total views – 4,046**

Boston Borough Council: (six-month stats from September 2024 to February 2025)

- Followers – 4,487
- Posts published – 17
- Posts by other accounts reposted - 12
- Total likes – 7
- Total reposts – 2
- Total comments – 0
- **Total views – 2,879**

South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership: (six-month stats from September 2024 to February 2025)

- Followers – 206

- Posts published – 6
- Posts by other accounts reposted - 0
- Total likes – 0
- Total reposts – 0
- Total comments – 0
- **Total views – 216**
- **Total views: 16,611**

Insights:

- Public sector organisations are struggling to maintain engagement levels with their audiences – down to a change in algorithms.
- More than half of public sector organisations are evaluating how they are using X.
- New social media platform (and competitor to X) Bluesky is seeing a surge in growth, audience and engagement, with X suffering a downturn in the same metrics.
- Threads – a Meta-owned platform – had 7m followers in June 2024.

Approach:

- To review X's effectiveness as a communication tool with split testing alongside Bluesky (or similar) with a view to either terminating use with X or only using X in specific circumstances (election results, for example).

Social media usage for officers and followers:

Followers:

For followers of the Partnership's (and constituent sovereign council's) social channels, this policy proposes to create the below 'house rules' which will be published via each of the three council's website and regularly cited to remind followers of their obligations when posting and interacting on our channels.

Social media house rules:

South Holland/East Lindsey/Boston Council uses a number of different social media channels to inform residents of our work and news from across the area, as well as to listen and respond to their views.

We want our channels to be a place where everyone can engage in safe, respectful discussions. In order for that to happen, we have created a simple set of house rules – what you can expect from us and what we expect of our residents.

These standards apply across all our social media channels and those who breach them may be blocked and reported.

What to expect from us:

- Our social media accounts will be monitored from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).
- The communications team and PSPS Customer Contact colleagues will respond to queries within three working days (as per the PSPS terms of reference).
- We will make our content accessible as possible.

- While AI is a tool to use for research, etc. we will not use AI generated content. If we share AI generated content from a stakeholder/partner, we will be clear about it.

What we expect from followers:

- Please keep comments relevant to the original topic. If you have feedback about a separate issue, send this to us via our ***feedback page***
- We will remove comments which we believe:
 - are abusive or obscene.
 - bully, harass or intimidate any individual or organisation.
 - are unlawful, libelous or defamatory.
 - promote discrimination based on age, disability, gender, marital status, pregnancy, race, religion and sexual orientation.
 - are spam.
 - are deliberately deceptive or misleading.
 - are promotional material, including links to external websites and promotions.
 - Please do not swear.

Staff

Staff should refrain from using their day-to-day work as content for their own social media channels. Instead, if there are project milestones etc, or something in which a staff member thinks is worthy of

wider attention, speak to the Communications Team who will post on the corporate channels. The team would then actively encourage as well as tag/mention individual staff members to share and comment on.

Whilst we recognise the value and importance of officers being able to share their own experiences and feelings about projects and the accomplishments of the councils and Partnership, the key is that these pieces of news are always first shared through the corporate channels, maximising their exposure and ensuring that the correct, agreed message is conveyed to residents, press and other interested parties and given the appropriate level of coverage.

We would also ask staff to take the time to read their council's Code of Conduct which references more about the use of social media.

Comment moderation:

For insight into the scale and nature of comments that the three councils receive on our social media platforms, we analysed six months' worth of comments on the three corporate Facebook pages.

N.B: Facebook was chosen as it is, by a significant margin, the most active and engaged platform we use. (The data below covering the second half of 2024 July – December).

Council	Overall	Service Related	Non-Service Related
Boston	7,124	966 (13.6%)	6,158 (86.4%)
East Lindsey	2,081	324 (15.6%)	1,757 (84.4%)
South Holland	3,495	1158 (33.1%)	2,337 (66.9%)

Total	12,700	2,448 (19.3%)	10,252 (80.7%)
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Analysis:

In total, the three councils received 12,700 comments across 2,466 posts on their main corporate Facebook accounts – an average of just over five comments per post.

Split down further to the number of comments received each working day over this period, which would equate to 98 comments every day that the councils received, just one platform.

Of these, 2,448 (19.3%) were service-based comments, where a factual response or sharing or linking of information would be able to go some way to addressing the reason for comment. Other responses are a variety of positive and negative reactions, political posting, tagging of friends or unrelated content, where a council response is either unnecessary or more time-consuming to research and sign-off.

Interestingly, 1,277 posts (51.8%) in this time received no comments of any kind, furthering the need for the Partnership to consider the use of data and analytics to curate content, and move away from those topics that are proven to not provoke engagement, saving officer time and resource, and improving resident sentiment at the quality and relevance of content produced.

These figures highlight the scale of content that there is to evaluate and respond to where required and gives an indication of the resource that would need to be dedicated to providing replies to all appropriate comments.

PSPS Customer Contact Team support responses to service-based comments received, such as waste collections and council tax billing, with a need for wider collaboration around those less frequent topics or those that fall outside of standard service requests.

The Communications Team will collaborate with Customer Contact colleagues to prepare scripts, stock responses and FAQs around these subjects, with a Teams Chat to be established between the two teams to allow officers to easily and quickly reach out for advice on potentially contentious or uncertain responses.

Comments will aim to be addressed quickly, due to the public nature of these posts and their ability to develop or escalate if left unaddressed, whilst message responses will be made consistent with the current expectation laid out in the SHDC automatic response, to aim to reply by the end of the following working day.

Response protocols:

Social media is one of the most visible and immediate ways the council interacts with the public. Done well, it builds trust, provides clarity, and reinforces the council's credibility. But it also presents risks - particularly when conversations become negative, emotional, or misinformed.

The protocols below are designed to help the Communications Team and Customer Contact respond consistently, calmly, and effectively to challenging posts that are non-service related.

Protocols:

1. Respond promptly

- Aim to respond within two working days wherever a reply is needed.
- Keep responses short, calm, and focus on clarity.
- Not all posts require a response.
- Review the post and assess its nature
- Will a response provide clarity?
- Is it a complaint?
- Is it widely seen or shared?
- Would silence seem evasive?
- Don't engage if: the post is purely inflammatory, there's no factual inaccuracy or reputational risk, a response is likely to escalate rather than clarify.
- Monitor quietly and prepare to step in only if needed.

2. Take it offline

- Move detailed or emotional conversations out of the public thread.
- Avoid getting drawn into extended public exchanges.
- Use a private channel (direct message, email, or phone) to resolve the issue.
- Respond publicly to show you've acknowledged the comment, then redirect.

3. Be empathetic and professional

- Always model the tone we expect from others.
- Use calm, neutral language - even if the original post is aggressive.
- Acknowledge the concern, then offer the next step or clarification.

- Avoid sarcasm, defensiveness, or being drawn into point-scoring.
- Tone should be human, not chatty. Aim for firm, respectful and kind.

4. Protect privacy

- Never post or confirm personal details in public.
- Don't mention names, addresses, account numbers or case details in response.
- If the issue involves someone's personal circumstances, move the conversation to private messages.
- Always follow GDPR and data protection protocols.

5. Stay consistent

- All responses should reflect a single, recognisable council voice.
- Use the agreed tone: confident, clear, and non-political.
- Avoid overly personal styles unless specifically agreed ("I" or "me").
- Collaborate when needed and use peer review on sensitive posts.
- Draft replies together for tricky topics.

6. Monitor and escalate when necessary

- Know when to step back and when to escalate.
- Escalate immediately if: a post involves threats, safeguarding, legal issues or defamation, elected members are being targeted or tagged in the post is gaining traction or media interest.

- Take a screenshot, log the post, and notify the Group Manager.
- Do not delete unless instructed
- Only use "hide" for toxic but non-illegal content if visibility is a concern.

Sub-groups:

Across the Partnership there are numerous examples of sub-groups and pages being operated by individual teams on social media, such as the markets and communities accounts.

Whilst these pages and their content remain the responsibility of those teams, there is an expectation that at least one member of the Communications Team will have access to these, in case of an urgent need to make or remove a post and is also available as a 'critical friend' to advise or feedback on any content or campaign suggestions.

The existing audiences built up on these pages is recognised, but, where a team does not already have their own corporate channel, a strong justification is needed for a new page or group to be created, and officers should not create any corporate social media account for business use without agreement/collaboration from the Communications Team. All requirements for social media communications should be requested through the Communications Team in the first instance.

When requesting a sub-group or page, teams will be expected to be able to demonstrate consideration and planning of its need across several areas. This will include details on its name and profile picture, group rules, who will require admin rights, what makes the output not achievable through the main corporate channels, and a content plan to evidence that there will be a regular, engaged stream of posts. If approved, these channels will be created by the communications team and then handed over.

Where corporate accounts are used, employees should always:

- Ensure information is accurate, up-to-date, and approved by the relevant team or project lead.
- Make posts accessible for all users to understand and use.
- Ensure strong account security, that corporate passwords are not shared wider and that channels are only used on approved devices.
- Remain professional and in-keeping with the Partnership's usual public tone and approach.
- Not share anything offensive, controversial, sensitive or politically bias.
- Ensure that the correct permissions are in place for any photography or other media used.
- Provide members of the Communications Team with admin access to the channel for security and contingency.

Where inappropriate information or content is found to be on a corporate channel a team manages, they will be asked to remove it in the first instance. Dormant or inactive accounts pose their own reputational risk to the Partnership, and groups or pages that are no longer posting may be asked to be closed if they are no longer required.

Security and housekeeping:

For security and access purposes, the Communications Team keeps a password-protected spreadsheet of all logins, passwords, etc for all corporate accounts and sub-groups so access can be granted.

Any malicious attack on councils' social platforms and indeed databases and internal IT systems means social media platform passwords, log-in details, etc can be changed wholesale immediately.

Passwords will be changed by the team no less than quarterly.

Operational focus

This policy will sit as an addendum to the existing Partnership Communications Strategy that sets out the Communications Team overall communication objectives – in particular, it is approach to strategic communications.

Sitting at the heart of the Strategy sits our CORE purpose communications model:

- C** – changing behaviour
- O** – operational effectiveness
- R** – reputation management
- E** – explanation of policies, actions and campaigns

These principles will guide all future content and direction across our corporate social media platforms.

In addition, monthly evaluation metrics will be collated and distributed, and these figures will used to assess operational effectiveness and how we can tweak, improve and learn moving forward.

In the past, the Communications Team has been at the behest of individual services and departments' requests for social media content. This has often led to messaging becoming fragmented, disjointed and due to the complexities with algorithms, etc. not visible to the full extent of our audiences.

With a more strategic focus on our social media outcomes, rather than outputs, this policy will underline the need for a more considered and tailored approach – coupled with audience data and insight – to leverage more opportunities to engage with audiences and keep them informed and aware of what councils in their area do.

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Objectives:

- Publish social media 'house rules' on council websites and social platforms to communicate to users how they should interact and behave.
- Use the insights and approaches set out in this policy for each of our main corporate channels.
- Move away from a service/department-led content approach to a more strategic decision-making process and strategic messaging that is led by the Communications Team.
- Work with PSPS colleagues to set up a robust system of comment response/moderation as set out in the policy above.
- To look into the possibilities of incorporating either analytical software and/or AI capability to capture and interpret audience trends, metrics, etc.
- To publish monthly evaluation reports across our platforms to Portfolio Holders, senior management, etc.
- To collaborate with owners of sub-groups to make sure that their platforms are fit for purpose, appropriate content and also that passwords, log-in details etc are shared with the Communications Team.
- To keep up to date a single password-protected document containing all relevant passwords/logins for all platforms.
- Review our corporate X channels based on engagement levels, etc and whether shifting focus to similar platforms such as BlueSky, etc.
- Develop a more distinct 'tone of voice' for how we communicate with residents across all our corporate platforms.
- Review a 'single point of contact' for our social media content – either within the team or identify funding opportunities to bring in additional resource.