



**Cheshire  
Police & Crime  
Commissioner**

# **SOCIAL MEDIA HOUSE RULES**



The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire will use online digital and social media to assist the Commissioner in communicating with the public and other stakeholders. We are active on the following social media platforms; Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Bluesky and Nextdoor. Please note that online media will not be monitored outside normal office hours.

We have developed the following House Rules to assist people to get the most out of using the Commissioner's online media channels.

## 1. BLOCKING AND UNFOLLOWING

- 1.1** If we block your account, this will probably be because you've followed or liked us purely to promote a product or service, or you've contravened the rules of a particular social media space.

## 2. MODERATION

- 2.1** Most online communities have their own rules and guidelines, which we will always follow.
- 2.2** Where possible, we will rely on the measures of protection and intervention which the social networking site already has in place (e.g. against illegal, harmful or offensive content), for example by flagging comments or alerting them to any breaches of the site's terms and conditions.
- 2.3** We also have some of our own rules. We reserve the right to remove any contributions or block users that break the rules of the relevant community, or any of the following guidelines:

### **Please do not:**

- be uncivil, distasteful or swear
- post messages that are unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive
- post content copied from elsewhere, for which you do not own the copyright
- post the same message, or very similar messages, more than once (also called "spamming")
- publicise your, or anyone else's, personal information, such as contact details
- advertise products or services
- impersonate someone else
- discuss ongoing cases or investigations

### 3. LIBEL

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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.

### 4. SUBJUDICE

- 4.1 Any information posted which is subjudice, in that it relates to any ongoing police or criminal justice enquiry or matter will be removed.
- 4.2 We cannot publish any information which may need to be disclosed in court so please don't post any information in relation to matters subject to ongoing police enquiry.

### 5. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

- 5.1 There is a section of our website with details on how to submit a [Freedom of Information request](#).
- 5.2 We will abide by the laws under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in the way that we deal with these. Please do not use social media to make a freedom of information request.

### 6. COMPLAINTS AND COMMENTS

- 6.1 There is a section of our website with details on how to [make a complaint](#).
- 6.2 If you wish to make a complaint, please use the correct process and remember that the Police and Crime Commissioner cannot investigate complaints about Police Officers or incidents.

### 7. REPORTING CRIME

- 7.1 Please do not use any of our social media accounts to report a crime.
- 7.2 All crimes should be reported to Cheshire Constabulary in the first instance. Always dial 999 in an emergency.

## 8. MONITORING, RESPONDING AND REPLYING

- 8.1** Our social media accounts are not monitored twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It is also easy to miss posts in busy social media traffic; however, we try and respond to genuine queries and point people in the right direction wherever we can and in good time.
- 8.2** We may sometimes need to do some research to find out more information in order to respond to you and may ask you to get in touch via other means to enable us to collect more details.
- 8.3** If your query or comment is serious, urgent, or involves personal details, please get in touch directly.

## 9. LIKING AND FOLLOWING

- 9.1** Please don't be offended if we don't 'Like' or 'Follow' you on social media. This doesn't mean we are not interested in what you have to say, we just need to keep our social media channels manageable.
- 9.2** We sometimes follow or like people who provide information that is pertinent to our work (for example government accounts, local media, and our partners) or those whose information we can pass on for the benefit of local people.
- 9.3** Occasionally, we'll also try and lend our support to local and national campaigns which complement those of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- 9.4** There will also be times we'll need to like or follow an account in order to take part in conversations.
- 9.5** Just because we like or follow someone, or share their information, it doesn't mean that we endorse them or all the other content on their social media channels.

## 10. SHARING

- 10.1** We try and share information that we think will be of interest or use to our followers, however please don't be offended if we don't reshare something you want us to.

**10.2** Notwithstanding paragraph 9.5, as a trusted organisation any sharing of information could be seen as endorsement of a particular view, individual or organisation. It's therefore important that we remain impartial and protect the Police and Crime Commissioner's reputation.

## 11. PRE-ELECTION PERIOD (PURDAH)

- 11.1** In the period prior to any election, we have to be very careful not to do or say anything that could be seen in any way to support any political party or candidate.
- 11.2** We will continue to publish content using social media but may have to remove responses if they are overtly party political so that we can remain in line with the legal rules that we have to abide by.
- 11.3** During this period, the Commissioner may engage in party political and campaigning activity on social media in a personal capacity, however this will not take place on any of the official Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire social media accounts due to our legal obligation to remain impartial.

## 12. USE OF DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA BY THE COMMISSIONER

**12.1** When using digital and social media the Police and Crime Commissioner will:

- abide by the commitments made when taking the **Oath of Office**
- adopt the **Nolan Principles** of life in public office
- abide by the house rules outlined above
- not use Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire branded sites for political campaigning purposes during Purdah
- not use Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire branded sites for personal use