**GPEW Social Media Policy**

| **Responsible body:** | **Framework for Ethics and Conduct** |
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| **Approved by:** | **Framework for Ethics and Conduct** |
| **Written by:** | **Scott Robinson, Manchester GP; Ann Forsaith, Headingley GP** |
| **Approved date:** |  |
| **Next review due:** |  |
| **Version:** | **0.6 (still draft)** |

1. **Introduction**

The Green Party has a wonderful, diverse community of social media users who have built our profile and credibility with great skill in recent years.

Social media has the potential to be a powerfully democratising force, allowing party activists to share party policies and positions without needing access to formal media.

As social media is a public communication tool, good working rules/guidelines are needed which those who use it need to follow.

Although social media is a great way for the Green Party to get its message across, members should be aware of how to use it effectively, avoiding the potential damage it can do. The style and tone of communication on social media should always be consistent with Green values. All GPEW members, but particularly those defined as ‘Agents of GPEW’ (see 2.) and administrators of social media platforms need to be careful that they uphold the highest standards.

There is a distinction to be made between internal spaces accessible only to party members (e.g. Green Spaces) and those which are visible to/used by the general public.

In line with our philosophical basis GPEW aims to promote a mature political culture, maintaining good working relationships whilst creating safe spaces internally where respectful disagreements over policy and strategy can take place.

GPEW members are required to abide by the Code of Conduct, and this applies as much to any interactions members may have with other members or members of the public on social media as it does to in-person interactions.

2. **Scope**

This policy applies to all members of GPEW who use social media. Social media in this document means not just social media websites listed in **appendix A**, but also other sites where members can post and reply to other users.

This policy also applies to local and regional parties, GPEW special interest groups, liberation groups and elected officers of the party.

Some members of the party can be considered **‘agents of the party’**, and so are subject to extra scrutiny, these are listed in **appendix B**. It should also be noted that the GPEW is potentially liable for any unlawful actions by agents of the party, including discrimination or harassment contrary to the Equality Act, and that disclaimers such as 'retweets are not endorsements' do not necessarily have any legal standing.

**3.** **Responsibilities**

The Framework Oversight Body is responsible for the approval and regular review of this document.

The Dispute and Complaints Referral Group (DCRG) and Disciplinary Committee (DC) have a responsibility to refer to this document when considering complaints that are about a member’s conduct on social media.

Members who have access to group accounts, either for local, regional, or liberation/special interest groups have responsibility to ensure that they act on reports of poor behaviour of those using the spaces (for facebook groups etc). Moderators of spaces on Green Spaces also have this responsibility

4. **Associated documents**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

· GPEW Constitution

· GPEW Code of Conduct

· GPEW Anti harassment and bullying policy

· GPEW Safeguarding policy

**5.** **Consultation**

This document should have wide consultation with members and as such the following groups were consulted initially in its development:

· Framework Oversight Body

· Green Party Regional Council (GPRC)

· Green Party Executive Committee (GPEx) including leadership

· GPEW Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

· Disciplinary Committee (DC)

· Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee (ADRC)

· Liberation Groups

o Green Party Women

o LGBTIQA+ Greens

o Greens Of Colour

o Jewish Greens

o Green Seniors

o Disabled Greens

o Green Survivors

o Green Seniors

o Greens for Animal Protection

· Young Greens

· Association of Green Councillors (AGC)

· Regional parties

· Party Spokespeople

For reviews, the Framework Oversight Body will ensure that there is sufficient consultation with groups above.

**6.** **Approval**

This document is approved by the Framework Oversight Body in conjunction with GPRC and GPEx.

**7.** **Review**

This document should be reviewed at least once every two years.

**8.** **Definitions**

**Individual account:** any account, profile, or page, on any site, that represents one individual member of GPEW.

**Group account:** any account, whether run by one or more members of GPEW, that represents a group of GPEW members, for example: local/regional parties, liberation groups, or other associated groups of GPEW. Communications made by these accounts may be considered an official communication from the Green Party as a whole.

**Social media complaint:** any complaint about the actions of a GPEW member that are either solely, or mainly, related to the use of social media.

**9.** **Specific rules for everyone- individual and group accounts**

The following rules apply to all members, either on individual member accounts or those running local/regional party, group, or liberation group accounts and should not be breached:

1) Do not criticise staff members, as this can be considered a breach of the duty of care towards employees. Concerns about staff behaviour or performance should be raised via the appropriate channels internally and should not be raised externally on social media.

**10.** **Specific rules and guidance for social media- individual accounts**

The following rules are standards that should not be breached by members responsible for individual accounts:

1) Across all the sites that you use to promote GPEW make it clear that you are a GPEW member.

2) Likes, retweets, and sharing of other posts must be done carefully. It is commonly agreed that this can show endorsement (or at the very least tacit agreement) of the shared post. You may share posts, but if the post is contrary to GPEW policies, you must make this clear what GPEW policy is, and explain why you are sharing the post.

3) Members must not harass by persistently retweeting, replying, or tagging (mentioning), others. If someone asks to be excluded from ongoing discussion, this must be respected and acted on, and should be considered as someone walking away from a discussion in person. Members should be aware that they can usually mute a discussion as well.

The following points are guidance that should be followed where possible.

1) Individual members may mute or block other accounts as they see fit, however agents of the party (see appendix B) should be more mindful of what this action may look like to non members.

2) Members with many followers must be mindful of the power that they can wield and be cautious with how they engage with other accounts.

**11.** **Specific rules for members running group accounts:**

The following rules should be kept in mind by members running group accounts:

1) Groups must ensure there is accountability. Accounts must be used for party/group purposes only and not personal purposes (members should make sure they use the right accounts when responding/replying with their personal views as opposed to those of a group). It should be possible to identify the author of posts/messages (this could be done by initialling posts, or some other means if multiple members have access to group accounts).

2) Passwords or admin access must be shared appropriately with elected/authorised members and changed when committees/elected members change. Members must hand over passwords/admin access to newly elected officers (at minimum, the chair and/or co-chairs) when handing over before or during the first meeting of the newly elected committee. Passwords/admin access must be removed from members who no longer sit on committees.

3) If group accounts are set up, the email address used must be a GPEW email address (ideally for a position and not a named person e.g. chair@, socialmedia@) and not a personal email address, this is to ensure that should a member leave, the account is still accessible. Group accounts that do not follow this rule should have the email addresses updated within one month of this document being approved.

The following points are guidance that should be followed where possible:

1) Local/regional party, liberation groups and other special interest group accounts should avoid blocking party members where possible. If blocking a party member is deemed necessary by a local/regional party or other group, the reasoning for this action should be recorded. You may find it useful to take screenshots to identify why you have blocked another account. Again, if blocking non members, you should be mindful of how this can be perceived. Make records, if possible, as to why decisions are made. (Some sites allow you to make records of admin actions such as blocking).

2) Administrators of groups (facebook etc) should be mindful when admitting members to groups and should not reject, block or remove party members from them, especially where the group is titled using the Green Party, unless there is good reason. If actions are taken, they should record the reasons for these decisions. **These groups cannot usually be considered private, even if they are set up as such, as confirming current membership of users would be impossible or impractical.**

3) Administrators/moderators of groups should also be mindful of their responsibilities under the GPEW Code of conduct, and take action to stop poor behaviour by deleting or hiding comments/posts where possible (see section 9.2 of GPEW Code of Conduct). Again, records should be kept if possible, for accountability purposes.

**12.** **Accessibility and Inclusivity- guidance**

Members who use social media should be mindful that their post or comments can be accessed by people with different accessibility needs. These guidelines should be considered and used wherever possible (particularly for group accounts, or official communications from spokespeople etc) to ensure the widest possible audience for social media posts:

**Content warnings (sometimes called trigger warnings) (often abbreviated to: CW/TW):** These are quick notes at the beginning of a post/comment/etc that give the topics about the be discussed e.g. domestic violence, assault, etc. These content warnings allow people to choose if they wish to read further. All members should consider using content warnings appropriately.

**Flashing images:** any posts of videos that include flashing images should again have a warning if possible. This is to protect people from potential issues related to flashing images e.g. epilepsy.

**Alternative text (alt text):** these are descriptions of videos or pictures that give some idea of the content to those who are visually impaired and might be using assisted reading technology.If a picture of text is used, it may not be possible for those who are blind or visually impaired to access this. If possible, a link to the full text should be provided, or the alt text should be comprehensive.

**Captions / narration on videos:** it is becoming increasingly easier to add captions and narration to videos, to assist those who are deaf or hard of hearing and those who are blind or visually impaired.

**13.** **Under 18s**

It is important to remember that not every member or user of social media is over 18. This means we must be mindful when interacting with others, especially when it is clear or made known that a member is under 18. No person should come to harm as a result of contact with the Green Party. All members have an obligation to respect this and particularly to safeguard those under 18 and/or at risk.

**14.** **Social media complaints**

GPEW encourages members to try to resolve disputes locally wherever possible and social media complaints are no different. If you have a concern about another member’s social media, you should raise this with them in the first instance. If you cannot do this, you may be able to ask your local/regional party, or an appropriate liberation group, for help. If you cannot resolve it this way, you may consider submitting a complaint to the GPEW complaints manager.

Dispute and Complaint Referral Group may consider referring a social media complaint to the respondent’s region if it feels that the region may be able to help resolve the complaint. If the region is not able to assist, the social media complaint may be considered again by DCRG. A record of attempted resolution will be made on the complaint form.

Social media complaints fall under the same rules as other complaints (Standing Orders for Party Discipline). As evidence is usually readily available for social media complaints in the form of screenshots or other records, it is possible that complaints might be considered under section 4.2 of the Standing Orders of Party Discipline:

4.2 The Committee may decide that it has been provided with sufficient evidence in the complaint to make a decision without the need for an investigation. The Committee shall decide to hold a formal hearing of the case at the next reasonably practicable date. The Complaints Manager will inform both the Complainant and the Respondent of the decision and of the date, time and venue of the Committee meeting when the case will be heard. The Respondent will be sent the complaint form and any necessary evidence appropriately redacted.

If, following a social media complaint, the respondent decides to delete the post/comment/etc that is complained about and apologise, the Dispute and Complaint Referral Group (DCRG) or Disciplinary Committee (DC), depending on the stage of the complaint, may dismiss the complaint as resolved (see section 3.9 of Standing Orders for Party Discipline).

**Appendix A**

Areas where this policy applies (not an exhaustive list):

* Green Spaces
* Facebook pages for local parties, regional parties, or special interest / liberation groups
* Twitter (also mastodon, Threads, bluesky etc.) accounts for groups as above;
* Instagram accounts for groups as above;
* Discussion forums (mumsnet, discord etc)
* public or private profiles / accounts of people who are identifiable as GPEW members;
* Facebook groups run in the name of GPEW;
* GPEW branded Facebook groups that are accessible to the public;
* Messenger apps like Facebook Messenger or Twitter Direct Messages;
* Comment sections of posts or newspaper articles;
* Anywhere that exists on the Internet that someone could conceivably see that lists members by name, and could be identified as GPEW members.

**Appendix B**

Agents of the Party

Elected Green Party members, and candidates for election, have a higher profile both within and outside the party than other members. The Code of Conduct states that their behaviour should be exemplary and they can (legally) be considered to be ‘agents’ of GPEW. This (not necessarily exhaustive) list of agents would/could include:

* MPs and peers
* Councillors/Members of a local authority group
* Members of national elected bodies (GPEx, GPRC and all other elected Committees)
* Party spokespeople
* Candidates for elected positions on internal bodies (? Which ones? )
* Local Party officers and Statutory Officers
* Official and/or members of the executive committees of local parties
* Official and/or members of the executive committees of Young Greens (MC -views on how similar Young Labour and Young Greens are in their constitutional arrangements needed here
* Party candidates and agents in general and local elections\*
* Members of regional party executives/Wales Green Party
* Elected mayors or police commissioners
* Party staff

\* There are specific laws for candidates for public office regarding spreading untruths or misinformation about other candidates, please ensure you are clear on these rules by consulting your election agent etc.