PENZANCE COUNCIL

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TOWN CLERK: JAMES HARDY

NOTICE OF MOTION TO PENZANCE COUNCIL

Please note that Standing Orders 2, 11 and 12 apply to motions. Written notice of a motion must be submitted to the Proper Officer at least seven clear days *(not including weekends, bank holidays or the day of the meeting)* prior to the meeting.

Section A – To be completed by Councillors

Title of Motion:	*Strengthening Democratic Resilience and Trusted Community Information*
Should this motion be referred from Penzance Council to a Committee and, if so, which?	*No*
Proposed by:	*Councillor Thalia Marrington*
Seconded by:	*Councillor Andy Law*
Proposed motion which will form a **resolution** for consideration at the meeting:	1. This Council believes:- I. Political disagreement is healthy and essential in a democracy while abuse, intimidation, harassment and deliberate disinformation are not. II. Misinformation can be genuinely posted, believed and shared and needs to be countered by accurate, factual and evidenced information. III. Public trust is strengthened when information is accurate, decision-making is transparent and debate is conducted respectfully. IV. Those who hold positions of leadership should seek to inform rather than inflame and should place truth and public trust above short-term political advantage. V. Communities benefit from trusted spaces, both online and offline, where information can be shared fairly, openly and respectfully.

	2. This Council recognises that democracy is not sustained by elections alone. It depends upon trust, truth, respectful disagreement and active citizenship. At a time of growing polarisation and declining confidence in public institutions, it commits itself to playing its part in fostering healthier public debate, supporting trusted community information and strengthening the democratic culture upon which the communities of Penzance parish depend. 3. In light of these issues, the Democratic Resilience and Trusted Community Information Position Statement, as set out at Appendix 1 to this motion, be approved and adopted.
Background *(to be provided by the proposer)*	*The United Kingdom has, within a decade, witnessed the murders of MPs Jo Cox, and Sir David Amess and former MP Ann Widdcombe, together with wider concerns about increasing hostility, intimidation and abuse directed towards those involved in public life.* *Public trust in politics and institutions has declined significantly, with many citizens expressing doubts that political leaders act primarily in the public interest.* *The growth of digital and social media has transformed how communities receive information, communicate and engage with local democracy.* *While these platforms have brought many benefits, they have also enabled the rapid spread of misinformation, disinformation, abuse, intimidation and politically polarising content.* *Much local public discussion now occurs in community Facebook groups and other hyperlocal online forums which often operate without formal support, training or access to reliable sources of information.* *Healthy democracy depends upon informed citizens, respectful disagreement, evidence-based discussion and the ability of people to participate in public life without fear of harassment or intimidation.* *It is noted that many people feel that they cannot engage online as it can be toxic and polarised and where intimidation and harassment can happen if people do not agree with a particular view. We are witnessing the stifling of true democracy when moderate voices remove themselves from the public arena.*

	Democratic renewal cannot be delivered by governments alone. It requires responsibility from citizens, elected representatives, community leaders, media organisations and digital platforms alike.
Implications (including financial and staffing / resources) anticipated by the proposer:	*There should be no adverse resource implications as a result of this motion as the position statement encourages Councillors end officers to engage in behaviours rather than committing the Council to the use of resources. The only instances where officer time may be required are those where work is already being undertaken.*
Proposers signature	*Submitted electronically.*
Seconders signature	*Submitted electronically.*

Section B – To be completed by officers

Additional background information	None.
Financial and budgetary implications	The following could have financial/budgetary implications, depending on the nature of the initiatives and what is meant by 'support', but this is likely to be negligible:- *The Council will, where possible and/or appropriate, support initiatives that improve media literacy, critical thinking, respectful civic engagement and understanding of local democracy, particularly among younger residents and those who may feel disconnected from public decision-making.*
Legal and procedural implications	None apparent.
Staffing and resource implications	The various articles within the Position Statement may require some officer time but this is likely to be limited as a number of the areas to which it refers are those where work is already undertaken. However, the following is arguably not within the remit of Penzance Council, and given the lack of communications from Cornwall Council, may require additional Penzance Council officer time to produce information which is worthwhile:- *Work will continue to be undertaken, in partnership with Cornwall Council, community organisations and the local media, to* • *Develop a regular package of accessible public information explaining major local*

	decisions, consultations, community issues and available services. In addition, the following is also likely to represent a draw on officer resources, and it is questioned as to whether it is appropriate for Penzance Council to undertake this role:- *officers are encouraged to:-* • *Engage positively with administrators of local and hyperlocal digital community groups.* • *Share best practice on creating welcoming and respectful online community spaces.*
Motion accepted or rejected by the Proper Officer *(including reason for rejection if applicable)*	Accepted.
Meeting date	9 November 2026
Referred to Committee *(if applicable)*	
Motion carried, amended or failed at the meeting(s)	
Detail of amendments *(if any)*	
Minute reference(s)	

Position Statement

Strengthening Democratic Resilience and Trusted Community Information

1. As elected members

Councillors will:-

- Avoid knowingly sharing disinformation, misinformation or unverified claims.
- Correct inaccurate information when identified, following consultation with the appropriate officers.
- Conduct political debate respectfully and without personal abuse.
- Comment on the message and not on the messenger
- Avoid seeking political advantage through the promotion or amplification of misinformation.
- Encourage evidence-led discussion and public engagement.

2. Community Information and Digital Democracy Initiative

Councillors and officers are encouraged to:-

- Engage positively with administrators of local and hyperlocal digital community groups.
- Share best practice on creating welcoming and respectful online community spaces.
- Engage in regular dialogue with community group administrators, Councillors and the Council's Communications and Democratic Services teams.
- Engage closely with local media in an open way to ensure good, open coverage of the range of work the Council does, rather than just the things the media thinks will make a good story, in order to maintain trust with residents and help them understand more how all works and fits together.

3. Strengthening Access to Reliable Local Information

Work will continue to be undertaken, in partnership with Cornwall Council, community organisations and the local media, to:-

- Develop a regular package of accessible public information explaining major local decisions, consultations, community issues and available services.
- Make this information available digitally and in printable formats, where possible.
- Support and spread awareness of the use of noticeboards, libraries, village halls and other public spaces as trusted sources of local information.
- Ensure residents who are not active on social media are not excluded from receiving important community information.

4. Promoting Democratic Participation

The Council will, where possible and/or appropriate, support initiatives that improve media literacy, critical thinking, respectful civic engagement and understanding of local democracy, particularly among younger residents and those who may feel disconnected from public decision-making. It will further encourage and promote working towards the digital ‘public square’ becoming a respectful, balanced place where everyone feels able to participate, where people pause and think before sharing and where personalisation, blame, intimidation and bullying are not tolerated and where poor behaviour is reported.