

FINDOCHTY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Policy on Petitions and Public Campaigns

Use of official FCC communications platforms and the council's position on endorsement

Authority	Moray Council Scheme of Establishment (2025–2029) / Code of Conduct
Version	1.1
Date Adopted	[date]
Review Period	Annual

This policy sets out the position of Findochty Community Council on sharing, promoting or endorsing petitions and public campaigns through its official communications. It applies to all FCC platforms including the website, social media accounts, email communications and any other official channels.

1. The Council's Position

Findochty Community Council is a non-party-political body. Its role is to represent the views of all residents of Findochty - not to advance particular political, ideological or campaigning positions. This is a requirement of both the Community Council Scheme and the Code of Conduct, which all members sign on appointment.

As a result, the council's official communications platforms will not be used to share, promote or endorse petitions or public campaigns unless the criteria in this policy are met.

This policy does not restrict individual members from holding or expressing personal views, signing petitions in a personal capacity, or engaging in public debate as private citizens.

The distinction is important: a member acting as a private individual is free to engage as they wish. It is only when using or requesting the use of official FCC platforms and the FCC name that this policy applies.

2. Why This Policy Exists

Official FCC communications - the website, social media accounts and email - represent the council as a whole, not any individual member. Using these channels to share a petition or campaign implies that the council collectively endorses it. This creates a responsibility to ensure that anything shared in the council's name:

- genuinely reflects a community wide interest, not a personal or partisan one
- does not compromise the council's political neutrality or its ability to represent all residents

- does not create the impression that the council is aligned with a particular political party, cause or ideology

Experience has shown that the line between a community issue and a political or ideological campaign is not always clear cut. This policy provides a framework for making that judgement consistently and transparently.

3. Criteria for Sharing a Petition or Campaign

FCC may consider sharing a petition or public campaign through its official platforms only if it meets all of the following criteria:

- It relates directly and specifically to a local issue affecting Findochty or its residents
- It has clear and demonstrable broad community interest - not simply the interest of one individual, group or viewpoint
- It is consistent with the council's role in advocating for local concerns
- It is not explicitly or implicitly party-political in nature
- It is not divisive or likely to alienate a significant portion of the community
- It does not risk compromising the council's neutrality, credibility or ability to represent all residents

Meeting some but not all of these criteria is not sufficient. All criteria must be satisfied before the council will share a petition or campaign through official channels.

Where a petition addresses a matter of genuine community concern but has political dimensions, the council may instead choose to raise the underlying issue directly with Moray Council or the relevant public body - without endorsing the petition itself.

4. How Decisions Are Made

The decision to share or endorse a petition or campaign through official FCC channels must be made by the Community Council as a whole - not by an individual member acting alone or on behalf of the council.

The process is as follows:

- A request to share a petition or campaign must be submitted in writing to the Secretary, or raised formally as an agenda item at a council meeting
- The request must include a copy of or link to the petition or campaign, and a brief explanation of why the member believes it meets the criteria in this policy
- The council will consider the request at a meeting, applying the criteria set out in Section 3
- A decision to share requires a simple majority vote of members present and voting

- The outcome - whether agreed or declined - will be recorded in the minutes

No individual member, including the Chairperson or Secretary, has the authority to share a petition or campaign through official FCC channels without a council decision. Doing so without authorisation would be inconsistent with the Code of Conduct.

5. Requests from Members of the Public

Residents or community groups may also request that FCC share a petition or campaign on their behalf. Such requests will be considered using the same criteria and decision making process as requests from members.

Requests from members of the public should be submitted in writing to the Secretary at secretary@findochty-cc.org. The council will acknowledge receipt and advise on timescales.

6. Alternative Approaches

Where a petition or campaign does not meet the criteria for sharing, but the underlying concern is one the council recognises as relevant to the community, FCC may consider alternative approaches, including:

- Raising the issue directly with Moray Council or the relevant public body on behalf of residents
- Providing neutral, factual information about how residents can engage with decision-makers themselves
- Commissioning a community survey or consultation to establish the breadth of community views
- Including the matter as an agenda item at a public meeting to allow open discussion

7. Individual Members' Personal Views

Nothing in this policy prevents any individual member from:

- holding personal views on any issue
- signing petitions or supporting campaigns in a personal capacity
- expressing personal opinions in public debate

However, when doing so, members must make clear that they are speaking or acting as private individuals and not on behalf of Findochty Community Council. This is a requirement of the Code of Conduct, which all members agree to on appointment.

The Code of Conduct requires members to clearly distinguish between their personal views and positions taken on behalf of the Community Council - especially in dealings with the media, members of the public, or on social media.

8. Review

This policy shall be reviewed annually and updated as required. Any material changes will be approved by the Community Council at a meeting.

Adopted by Findochty Community Council on: _____

Signed (Chairperson): _____

Signed (Secretary): _____