

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1. All staff members are expected to understand and follow these simple but important guidelines relating to the use of social media. These guidelines cover all social media platforms, including but not limited to:

- Social networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, X)
- Blogs (including personal blogs as well as comments on other blogs)
- Video and Photo sharing websites (Instagram, Flickr, YouTube, Vimeo, Snapchat, Tiktok, Pinterest)
- Direct 1:1 or group message apps or platforms (Mobile text messages, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Slack)
- Forums and discussion boards (Google Groups, Yahoo! Groups)
- Online encyclopaedias (Wikipedia, Sidewiki)

1.2. Failure to comply with this policy will be treated as a serious breach of policy and will be dealt with under the council's disciplinary policy.

2. Personal use of social media

2.1 Staff using social media must not post defamatory, bullying, or harassing material in relation to the council or its employees.

Staff using social media must not post material that will bring the council into disrepute.

Staff using social media must not post any material that is the intellectual property of the council.

2.2 Staff members using social media must ensure that, if sharing personal news items publicly on their personal social media accounts, they do not include reference to the council by name or by photograph, or to any staff member, supplier, councillor or any other person or organisation connected with the council, or any of their relations or friends (as far as they can be expected to be aware of such relationships)

2.3 Staff members should be aware that use of social media which has the effect of bullying and / or harassing another staff member, as detailed in the council's bullying and harassment policy, will be dealt with under the council's disciplinary policy and procedure. For the avoidance of doubt this includes:

- deliberate ignoring or isolation of a member of staff, including exclusion from social media which serves to isolate or criticise/complain about a staff member; and
- behaviour which causes an individual to feel ignored, marginalised, or excluded, including exclusion from a social media which has the effect of isolating or criticising/complaining about a staff member

3. Use of social media on behalf of the council

3.1. Posts on social media which are, or purport to be, representing the council should only be made by the Clerk, or other nominated officer.

3.2. Any staff member permitted to post on social media on the council's official social media channels shall at all times be courteous and respectful, responsive, and

professional. At no time should any personal information about any staff member, councillor or supplier be shared, and all efforts to protect the reputation of the council should be made. The council's official social media channels must never be used to share any personal thoughts, views, opinions or information.

- 3.3. Any sharing on the council's official social media channels of 3rd party content should be very carefully selected so that sharing such content does not compromise the reputation of the council and does not breach this social media policy, even if the content and information shared did not originate from the council's social media channel. If it is deemed appropriate to share such content, credit for the source should always be given.
- 3.4. Any staff member who becomes aware of a 'fake' council social media channel or of a breach of this policy must report it to the Clerk immediately.

4. Councillor use of social media

- 4.1. Councillors' views posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the council at a council or committee meeting may constitute predisposition, predetermination or bias and may require the individual to declare an interest at council meetings.
- 4.2 The Code of Conduct applies to councillor online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication.
- 4.3 Councillors must not present personal opinions as that of the Town Council.
- 4.4 Councillors must not engage in personal criticism on social media of other councillors, council employees, individuals, or organisations with whom the Town Council has dealings.
- 4.5 Councillors must be respectful of the Town Council and its employees. Misleading or derogatory comments about members of staff are inappropriate and unacceptable. councillors engaging in this activity will be reported to the monitoring officer.