

# LTC Social Media Policy

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This policy covers the use of social networking applications by Council employees, Councillors and by partners or other third parties on behalf of the Council. These groups are referred to collectively as 'Council representatives' for brevity.

**The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking applications which are used for any Council-related purpose and regardless of whether the applications are hosted corporately or not.**

## **THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

**The law governing communications in local authorities can be found in the Local Government Acts 1986 and 1988. The Council must also have regard to the Government's Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity. The Town Council's adopted Standing Orders and Code of Conduct should be adhered to.**

**\*This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and it may be amended at anytime\*.**

## **When participating in online communication, Council Representatives are required to:-**

- Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent Always disclose their identity and affiliation to the Council
- Never made false or misleading statements
- Not to present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment.
- They must protect the good reputation of the Council
- Be mindful of the information posted on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council
- Keep the tone of comments respectful and informative, never condescending or 'loud'. Use sentence case format, not capital letters, do not write in red to emphasise points
- Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks. Language that maybe deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief should not be published on any social media site
- Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications
- Do not post comments that you would not be prepared to make in writing or face to face
- Never name an individual third party unless you have written permission to do so
- Seek permission to publish original photographs or video from the persons or

organisations in the video or photographs before they are uploaded. You must check that there is parental permission before photos of children are used

- Respect the privacy of other councillors, staff and residents
- Never post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations such as libel and copyright

## 1. Terms of Use for Social Networking Applications:

- 1.1 If Council Representatives blog, tweet or comment personally and not in their role as a councillor, they **must not act, claim to act or give the impression that they are acting as a representative of the Council.**
- 1.2 All Council Representatives must ensure that they use Council facilities appropriately. If using a Council-provided social networking area, any posts made will be viewed as made in an official capacity.
- 1.3 Council Representatives must not allow their interaction on any websites or blogs to damage their working relationships with others. They must not make any derogatory, discriminatory, defamatory or offensive comments about other staff, councillors, the Council or about the people, businesses and agencies that the Council works with and serves.
- 1.4 Posts must not contain anyone's personal information other than necessary basic contact details.
- 1.5 Council Representatives must not be used to publish any content to a Council page or blog which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claims for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the Council into disrepute.
- 1.6 Council social media must not be used for party political purposes or specific campaigning purposes as the Council is not permitted to publish material which 'in whole or part appears to affect public support for a political party' (LGA 1986).
- 1.7 Must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns.
- 1.8 Must not be used for actions that would put Council representatives in breach of Council codes of conduct or policies relating to Councillors or staff.
- 1.9 Must not breach the Council's equality and diversity or bullying and harassment policies.
- 1.10 All social media sites in use should be checked on a regular basis to ensure that the security settings are in place.

## 2. Posting and Monitoring Content

The Council Clerks will be moderators, who will be responsible for posting & monitoring the content on Council pages and ensure compliance with the Social Media Policy.

The moderator will have authority to immediately without notice or comment, remove any posts from the Council's social media pages if they are deemed to be inflammatory or of a defamatory or libelous nature.

### 3. Personal use of Social Media

Councillors should be aware and recognise that there is a risk of damage being caused to the Council via their personal use of social media when they can be identified as an elected Councillor. This may be by direct identification (because a profile or content expressly states a Council association) or indirect identification (because friends, family or others know the user works for the Council).

If in respect of any personal use of social media a Councillor can be identified as associated with the Council by the profile or content then the following guidance should be complied with:

You should:

- Expressly state (through a prominent disclaimer) on any profile or content that identifies you as a Councillor (or otherwise refers to or implies a relationship with the Council) that the stated views are your own personal views and are not those of the Council;
- Ensure that readers are not misled into believing that any material published by you is on behalf of the Council, authorised by the Council or official Council policy if it is not;
- Ensure all content that relates to the Council or Council business is accurate, fairly balanced, not misleading and complies with any relevant Council policy;
- Comply with the terms and conditions of the social media site being used.

In addition to the provisions outlined in the main body of the Social Media Policy, you must not:

- Make any comment or post material so as to give a reasonable person the impression that you have brought your office as Councillor or the Council into disrepute;
- Present political or personal opinion as fact or as representative of the Council;
- Imply that you are authorised to speak as a representative of the Council nor give the impression that the views you express are those of the Council;
- Post or publish any material that is harassing or bullying. Harassment may include personal attacks on officers;
- Publish content in a way which appears as if the Council has endorsed it;
- Publish content in an abusive manner or contravenes the Council's Dignity at work Policy.