

REPORT TO ENVIRONMENT AND GENERAL PURPOSES
COMMITTEE
SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY



Report Reference EN-21-10
Meeting Date 19th July 2021
Agenda Item 10
Prepared by Town Clerk

1.0 BACKGROUND

The council's Communication and Community Engagement Policy outlines the council's commitment to regular communication with the community. This report proposes to additions to the policy to provide greater guidance for members and officers in relation to social media.

2.0 PROPOSED ADDITIONS

2.1 ADDITION OF NEW 2.10

2.10 The council will moderate its social media and remove any comments/posts which are considered to be obscene, abusive or defamatory.

2.2 ADDITION OF ANNEX B – GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLOR USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The council has adopted a Code of Conduct which is binding on all members. If members use social media in their capacity as a councillor they should always be mindful of the code and the principles applicable to holding public office of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

When using social media:

Do:

- Set appropriate privacy settings for any networking site
- Watch out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on any blog or page you manage and remove them as soon as possible to avoid any perception that you/the council condones such posts
- Be aware that the higher your profile as a councillor, the more likely it is that you may be seen as acting in an official capacity when you blog or network
- Ensure any Council facilities and titles are used appropriately – if using a Council provided site or social networking area, any posts that you make are extremely likely to be viewed as being made in your official capacity
- Avoid publishing any information that you could only have accessed in your position as a councillor
- Exercise caution if making 'political' points and avoid being specific or personal about individuals - including other councillors and especially council employees.

Don't:

- Comment in haste
- Post comments that you would not be prepared to make in writing or in face-to-face contact
- Do not use social media and public platforms which have been used for council communication while off sick or long-term leave as this does give a confusing message to residents.
- Do not use Council facilities or social media accounts for personal or political purposes

Never:

- Post comments which are in breach of the Council's Equality Policy or that incite violence or hatred.

2.3 ADDITION OF ANNEX C – GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

All employees should be familiar with the council's policy on use of social media as set out in the Staff Handbook.

Additionally, when using social media:

Do:

- Ensure you are familiar with the terms of use on third party websites (e.g. Facebook) and adhere to these at all times
- Ensure any information published is factual, fair, thorough and transparent.
- Be aware that information published on social media may stay in the public domain indefinitely, without the opportunity for retrieval/deletion
- Respect copyright laws whilst using social media
- Remember that you will be seen as ambassadors for the council and should always act in a responsible and socially aware manner.

Don't:

- Publish information which is not already known to be in the public domain e.g. available on the council website, contained in minutes of meetings, stated in council publicised policies and procedures or approved by the Town Clerk.
- Publish information from internal/private conversations or reports without permission from relevant parties
- Publish any materials or comments that could be regarded as unacceptable in the workplace.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the committee approves the three additions to the policy.