

POLICY TITLE

Social Media Policy

REVISION DATE

23rd September 2019

POLICY AIM

To establish the principles of use of Social Media by Skegness Town Council employees, Councillors, representatives and volunteers. To provide guidance on the use of Social Media

POLICY STATEMENT

What is Social Media?

'Social media' is the term commonly given to websites and online tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way = by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. This interaction may be through computers, mobile phones and tablet technology, but may extend in the future.

Examples of social media websites include:

Social networking – (eg. Facebook)

Professional networking (e.g. LinkedIn)

Video sharing – (eg. YouTube)

Blogs (eg. Wordpress)

Micro-blogging (eg. Twitter)

Message boards (eg. BBC Messageboard)

Wikis (eg. Wikipedia)

Principles

- To publish information about the work of Skegness Town Council to a wider audience.
- To avoid entering into online debates or arguments about the Council's work. Social Media must NOT be used in the recruitment process for employees or new councillors - other than for the sole purpose of placing vacancy advertisements - as this could lead to potential discrimination and privacy actions, as well as breach of data protection issues.

Approved Council Social Media

- *(Parish/Town Council website)*
- *(Facebook page)*
- *(Twitter account)*
- *Instagram*

Users of Council Social Media

In accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, the Town Clerk is the Council's nominated Press Officer with the authority to issue official press releases. No other person (other than the Mayor acting in an emergency or at a time of crisis or the Deputy Town Clerk when deputising for the Clerk under delegation) has the authority to issue public statements on behalf of the Council.

1. Guidance for Council Officers on the use of Council Social Media

- Officers should be familiar with the terms of use on third party websites – e.g. Facebook - and adhere to these at all times
- No information should be published that is not already known to be in the public domain – i.e.. available on the Council's website, contained in minutes of meetings, stated in Council publicised policies and procedures, or approved by the Town Clerk (or Deputy Town Clerk under delegation).
- Information that is published should be factual, fair, thorough and transparent.
- Everyone must be mindful that information published in this way may stay in the public domain indefinitely, without the opportunity for retrieval/deletion.
- Copyright laws must be respected.
- Conversations or reports that are meant to be private or internal must not be published without permission.
- Other organisations should not be referenced without their approval – when referencing, link back to the original source wherever possible.
- Do not publish anything that would be regarded in the workplace as unacceptable.
- Staff must remember that they will be seen as ambassadors for the Council, and should always act in a responsible and socially aware manner.

2. Third party Social Media and Individual Councillor Usage

Councillors need to think about whether they are acting in a private capacity, or whether any impression might be conveyed that they are acting for and on behalf of Skegness Town Council. The Council has adopted a Code of Conduct which is binding on all members. If you use Social Media in your official capacity as a Councillor, you should always be mindful of the Code, and of the seven Nolan principles applicable to holding public office – selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Do:

- Set appropriate privacy settings for any networking site
- Watch out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on any blog or page and remove them as soon as possible to avoid any perception that you condone such views
- 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 are used appropriate – 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
- Be careful if making ‘political’ points, and avoid being specific or personal about individuals including other Councillors.

Don’t:

- Comment in haste
- Post comments that you would not be prepared to make in writing or in face-to-face contact
- Use Council facilities for personal or political purposes

Never:

- Post comments that are in breach of the Council’s Equality and Diversity Policy or that incites violence or hatred.

IMPLEMENTATION

All Councillors and Staff have responsibility to ensure this policy is implemented and followed.

Failure to do so may result in Disciplinary Action being taken against staff or Councillors being reported to the East Lindsey Monitoring Officer under the code of conduct.

MONITORING

The policy will be monitored in the following ways:

MONITORING ACTIVITY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Any breach of the policy be reported to the Town Clerk	Anyone
Reports will be made as part of the Quarterly Governance Report to Management Committee under Risk Management	Town Clerk
Reports will be investigated – consideration will be given as to what evidence has been provided and the seriousness of the allegation. If the report could be considered criminal in nature, then the matter will be passed to the Police.	Town Clerk (or if complaint is about the Town Clerk then the Mayor)

POLICY CONSULTATION

No consultation has been undertaken

POLICY APPROVAL

Approved 2nd October 2019

RELATED POLICIES & STRATEGIES

Equality Policy
Councillor Code of Conduct
Standing Orders
Information Security Policy
Data Protection Policy