

HONITON TOWN COUNCIL

Social Media Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Social media is the term commonly given to web-based and mobile technology tools which allow interaction and engagement between individuals, organisations and communities, by knowledge, content or interests. sharing opinions,
- 1.2.1.2 Honiton Town Council will use social media to communicate effectively with the public and stakeholders.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:
- 2.1.1 Respond to the increasing public use of social media as a way to communicate
- 2.1.2 Establish a corporate approach, standards and guidance on the use of social media
- 2.1.3 Further the council's aims and objectives including promotion of key campaigns, projects and events
- 2.1.4 Oversee how the council communicates messages to the public, while maintaining its public duties
- 2.1.5 Uphold the reputation of the council and enhance the image of Honiton
- 2.1.6 Provide an appropriate level of awareness, knowledge and skill to properly manage the use of social media and minimise the risks to the council
- 2.1.7 Help employees to distinguish between the use of social media in their work and personal lives.
- 2.1.8 Provide clarity to employees in understanding the behaviour expected for functioning in an electronic world are no different from those expected of employees on a daily basis in other methods of communication.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to employees of the council who are authorised to access the council's social media platforms.
- 3.2 This policy is designed to cover the council's use of social media where the content, information, or services are being provided by, or on behalf of, the council.
- 3.3 This policy is designed to cover the council's use of Facebook and Twitter.
- 3.4 Contributions covered by this policy include, but are not limited to, text, photographs and video.
- 3.5 As social media evolves over time, this procedure will be adapted to reflect modifications.

4. Legal and statutory considerations

- 4.1 The council will abide by any relevant or applicable laws, terms, and conditions to ensure the organisation is not exposed to risks. This includes, but is not exclusively limited to, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the GDPR 2018.

4.2 Council use of social media must be undertaken in accordance with the council's policies and procedures. This includes, but is not exclusively limited to, the Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure, Equality and Diversity Policy, Communications/PR Policy and Procedure, Complaints Policy and Procedure, Health and Safety Policy, and Information Policy. These policies will be reviewed in the fullness of time and it will be the most up to date policy that is in force at any given time.

4.3 Use of social media sites will at all times be consistent with the council's duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults, in accordance with relevant statutory requirements.

4.4 Employees using social media sites for business purposes must maintain political neutrality and not indicate individual political opinions.

4.5 In the six-week run up to a local, general or European election (also known as the pre-election period) the council must not do or say anything that could be seen in any way to support any political party or candidate. The council will continue to publish important service announcements using social media but may have to remove responses if they are overtly party political.

4.6 A statement will be published on all council social media to set out the policy on acceptable use of these platforms by the public.

5. Professional use of social media

5.1 The reputation and/or business of the council, service users, partners or others connected with the council must not be brought into disrepute through use of social media sites.

5.2 The council will accept no liability for an individuals' participation on social media sites. Participants are personally accountable for any contributions they make.

5.3 When participating in social networking or while using social media, common sense and good judgment must be used when posting or sharing material. If not, consequences can include, among other issues, negative publicity, regulatory attention and confidentiality or copyright concerns.

5.4 If material posted by an employee breaches council policy, they may be subject to disciplinary action.

6. Posting on social media

6.1 Employees should feel able to respond to comments on social media sites where they feel knowledgeable and confident to do so, particularly where someone is looking for help, or having a problem with a service the council provides.

6.2 Where employees are unable to respond to such postings they should raise the matter with either their line manager or inform the relevant member of staff.

6.3 Where an issue is potentially damaging to the reputation of the council the management team should also be alerted.

6.4 Where a mistake is made in a posting, it should be publicly corrected at the earliest opportunity.

6.5 Any retweets, follows, or likes are not an endorsement of a service, individual or organisation. The council does not take responsibility for any content on pages or profiles it has shared.

6.6 Unless otherwise stated, the views or comments given on any of the council's social media sites may not necessarily reflect the views of the town council.

7. Monitoring and responding

7.1 The council's social media accounts are monitored Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays and public holidays) from 10am to 2pm. There may be other times when the accounts are monitored, but this will be variable.

7.2 The council will respond to comments, replies and direct messages as soon as possible. Sometimes it will be necessary to find out information before a reply can be given.

7.3 The council reserves the right to block an account if a user is promoting a product or service, if the user has infringed the rules of the social media space, or if the user's interactions are offensive.

7.3 The council will rely on the measures of protection and intervention which the social networking site already has in place, e.g. against illegal, harmful or offensive comment, for example by reporting posts to the site operator.

7.4 The council reserves the right to delete any posts that breach the rules of the community or the council's own terms of use. This includes:

7.4.1 Posts that are unlawful, harassing, defamatory, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually orientated or racially offensive

7.4.2 Swearing

7.4.3 Content copied from elsewhere, for which the poster does not own the copyright

7.4.4 The same or similar messages posted more than once. It will be considered 'spam'

7.4.5 Publicising personal information, such as contact details

7.4.6 Advertisements for products or services

7.4.7 A user impersonating someone else

7.4.8 Political comments

7.4.9 Libellous statements

7.4.10 Controversial, irrelevant and off topic messages, otherwise known as 'trolling'

7.5 Social media is not the appropriate avenue for raising an official complaint, serious issues or urgent requests. Complaints should be made in accordance with the council's Complaints Policy and Procedure. Serious issues or urgent requests should be referred directly to the council office, councillor or relevant staff member.

8. Personal use of social media

8.1 As the use and popularity of social media grows, the lines between what is public and private, personal and professional have blurred. The council respects employees' and councillors' right to personal use of social media.

8.2 Councillors and employees not bring the reputation of the council or colleagues into disrepute. Actions which adversely affect the council's reputation may become a matter for the council.

8.3 If councillors and employees already use social networks or blogs for personal use, any comments or images should not reflect on the council in a negative manner.

8.4 When using social media for personal purposes, councillors and employees must not imply they are speaking for the council. The use of the council email address, council logos or other council identification should be avoided and it should be made clear that what is said is not representative of the views and opinions of the council.

8.5 A clear distinction should be made between profiles/postings as an individual or those as a councillor or member of staff. Profiles/postings in relation to council business should be transparent and respectful.

8.6 Councillors and employees should comply with other council policies when using social media. For example, do not breach council confidentiality, or the code of conduct. If in doubt, don't post it.

8.7 Councillors and employees should be mindful of their privacy settings.

9. Review

9.1 This policy will be reviewed in September 2019 or sooner if there are changes in legislation or best practice.