



# Social Media Policy

## Introduction

This policy applies to council employees and gives guidance to members on the use of social media.

Council employees and members are encouraged to show pride in the Town Council and its work, in line with our values. As with word of mouth recommendations, social media sharing is an important tool for promoting and sharing the work of the council.

Council employees are governed by strict rules on impartiality and publicity and must not support or promote the political views of any councillor or group of councillors. Any communications must be in line with council policy.

“Social media” covers sites and applications including but not restricted to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, LinkedIn, Nextdoor, blogs, discussion forums, wikis and any sites which may be created after the creation of this policy.

## Council accounts

All Town Council employees must ensure social media is used sensibly and responsibly and not adversely affect the council or its business, damage its reputation or violate any policies.

Managing accounts and responding appropriately to the ensuing communication that is invited takes up much time so the Town Council will focus only on a streamlined number of accounts.

Creating a new account must be a considered move, involving evaluation of the value which adding a new account can bring to the council.

Council social media must not be used for party political purposes or party political campaigning purposes. Officers must also not promote councillors’ social media accounts during the pre-election period.

Council officers must not use inappropriate, abusive, bullying, racist or defamatory messages either in or outside the work environment.

If an officer receives threats, abuse or harassment through social media as part of their work they must report it immediately to their line manager, or, if not possible, to the Council’s membership.

As a general rule, the Council’s officers will not engage in a debate over social media as to the merits of a particular policy or activity.

Any safeguarding issue or issue which might involve the committing of a crime, raised through social media, will be addressed through other communication channels, and not conducted in public.

## Principles and guidance for using social media

**Respectful** – online conversations should be polite, open and respectful. Language should be friendly, honest and professional at all times. Confidentiality should be respected with no private information or the personal information of others being disclosed.

**Credible and consistent** – be accurate, fair, thorough and transparent. What is said online should be consistent with the Town Council's other communications.

**Responsive and accurate** – questions and comments should be responded to in a timely manner with factual and useful information.

## Members' guidance

Councillors need to be clear at all times whether they are posting in a personal or political capacity, as an elected member or as a private individual.

Including 'Cllr' or 'Councillor' in a name is taken to mean that the councillor is writing in the capacity as an elected member. Reference to the member's political party will also imply that the councillor is acting as an elected member.

Councillor profiles, websites and social media accounts should clearly be labelled as either private or personal or in your capacity as a councillor.

The offices of Mayor and Deputy Mayor are traditionally viewed as carrying a degree of impartiality over and above the role of councillor. **Access to the Mayoral social accounts, created by and managed by the Town Council, will be given to the Mayor at the start of their term to use to promote the role.** The **Mayor and Deputy Mayor** should not refer in their social media posts to their political party allegiance or explicitly support or promote the activities of a political party, during their term of office.

## Useful links

Government guidance on local authority publicity:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recommended-code-of-practice-for-local-authority-publicity>

Local Government Association guidance for councillors on using social media:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/leadership-workforce-and-communications/comms-hub-communications-support/social-media>