Social Media Policy

APPROVED BY	
DATE	June 2018
EDITION/VERSION	2
REVIEW DATE	

Contents   Page

1. Policy Statement

1.1 There are many benefits to using social media. Alongside other communications it can help Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to communicate with citizens in the places they already are, to consult and engage and be more transparent and accountable.

1.2 The Council also values social media as a tool in the workplace and encourages employees to use it responsibly.

1.3 Employees are able to access social media services and social networking sites at work either through the Council's IT systems or via their own personal equipment. This must be done in an appropriate manner ensuring that there is no risk to your own personal health and safety or that of other individuals including colleagues and members of the public.

1.4 This policy describes the rules around social media within Neath Port Talbot Council and the responsibility of employees in relation to the use of social media at work. It sets out how staff should behave when accessing the Council's social media accounts. It also explains rules about using personal social media accounts at work.

1.5 If employees wish to set up service specific Council Social Media Account, please click here.

2. Overview

2.1 This policy applies to all employees and to anyone else working for the Council. It does not form part of the contract of employment and can be amended at any time.

2.2 The use of social media may, together with the wider use of Council IT resources, be monitored to make sure that all users are complying with this policy. Whenever employees use Council IT resources and systems, they give the Council their consent to monitor their activities.

2.3 Employees who breach this policy may face action under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Where there is a serious breach of the social media policy, this may result in dismissal in line with the Council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. You may also be required to remove any social media content that in itself breaches this policy and this may invoke the disciplinary procedure if you fail to do so. In addition, if comments you post about the Council or named individuals are found to have harmed their reputation, you could face legal proceedings.

3.   What is Social Media?

3.1   Social media can be defined as websites and applications that allow users to create and share content and/or take part in online networking. The most popular sites include the following:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- YouTube
- Google+
- Instagram
- Pinterest
- Flickr
- Tumblr
- Reddit.
- WhatsApp
- BBM

4. USING SOCIAL MEDIA AT WORK

4.1   You may use Council IT resources and your own equipment to access social media during work hours as long as it is during the hours specified below, that you follow this policy and you are not involved in creating any inappropriate or unprofessional content. Your use must also not interfere with your duties, ==or put your own health and safety or the health and safety of others at risk.==

4.2   Usage must take place within your own time – before 8.30 am, between 12 noon and 2.00 pm and after 5.00 pm with no exceptions. This applies seven days per week.

4.3   Employees must not post personal content on any Council social media account that they are authorised to use. These accounts belong to the Council and access will be stopped if there is abuse of this policy in any way. When an employee leaves the Council, access will also be stopped and your user names and passwords requested. The Council may also request them at any other time and in either case these must be supplied on request.

4.4   Please see Appendix One for further information in relation to etiquette and style and important rules.

5. YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES WHEN USING SOCIAL MEDIA

5.1   Always identify yourself and make it clear your opinions are your own and you are not speaking on the Council's behalf. You might consider doing this in a disclaimer. Use a personal email address, not your Council email address, and do not create a social media account that could be mistaken for a Council account we have set up, or could set up.

5.2   It is your duty to protect the Council's interests and you must not publish anything that could directly or indirectly damage these or compromise our reputation. You must never speak on the Council's behalf on social media unless authorised to do so and you must always make sure anything you do post is accurate and lawful. Always get your colleagues' permission before posting images of them or any of their personal details.

5.3   You must take personal responsibility for your social media content. If you can be identified as working for the Council, you must make sure your profiles, and anything you post, are congruent with how we expect you to present yourself to the public, stakeholders and colleagues. Be mindful that even if you do not name us as your employer, people who know you and where you work may still make an unwelcome association with the Council. If you are in any doubt about what is and is not acceptable, please talk to your manager.

5.4   You must always show respect to others when using social media. You must never criticise the Council, our service users, suppliers, your colleagues or anybody else you come into contact through working for the Council. Our other policies — in particular those covering Dignity at Work and the Employee Code of Conduct — give guidance on the type of behaviour we consider unacceptable in the workplace, and we expect you to maintain the same high standards when using social media. Specifically, we will not tolerate any of the following:

●   abusive or threatening language
●   sexually explicit language
●   unlawful or disrespectful comments
●   false or misleading statements
●   impersonating your colleagues or third parties
●   inciting somebody to commit a crime.
●   anything that could reasonably construed as inciting or encouraging someone to commit a breach of health and safety rules

5.5   If another Council employee is bullying, harassing or victimising you using social media, you must follow the process laid out in our Dignity at Work Policy which can be accessed via the HR Intranet or via your line manager or trade union representative.

5.6   You are obliged to respect Council confidentiality at all times and not to use social media to comment on sensitive matters, including — but not restricted to — the following:

- our intellectual property
- information on other employees
- information on service users
- any information intended for internal use only
- anything else that is not already in the public domain.

5.7   We also insist that you never use the Council logo, or other corporate artwork in anything you post or as part of any of your social media profiles.

5.8   You may share posts/messages from council accounts (corporate and/or service) that contain these elements, however, any comments you share in relation to these must comply with this policy.

5.9   You must remain aware at all times of the public nature of social media. Even content posted on a restricted forum can quickly be shared across other social media and you must assume that anything you publish anywhere will sooner or later reach the public domain.

5.10   When you share content posted by others, remember that you may be seen as giving tacit approval to opinions that could bring the Council into disrepute.

5.11   You must never air grievances about the Council or any of its activities on social media. Should you wish to make a complaint, you should raise it first with your manager. If the issue remains unresolved, you must then follow the Grievance Procedure.

6.   OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE

6.1   Employees should always respect copyright and always check whether or not a third party's content is protected before you reuse or repost it.

6.2   If an employee comes across anything posted to a social media site that breaches this policy or otherwise brings the Council into disrepute, they should report this to their manager in the first instance.

6.3   Further guidance is provided in Appendix One in relation to social media etiquette and some important rules to consider when using social media.

Etiquette and style

Keep your communications clear, positive, polite and professional. Plain language helps. Many people use abbreviations on Twitter – you'll pick these up as you go along! Avoid being ironic or sarcastic, it can be misinterpreted. On Facebook, you will need to monitor and, if necessary, censor the contributions that other people make to your site; delete them if they do not match your required standards of behaviour or language. Be careful of making derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age. Defamatory and offensive language will be attributed to the publisher as well as the original author and could incur financial liability. It is up to you to decide if you want to remove posts that disagree with your political position, however if you do remove them you may be accused or censoring contributions on political grounds. So even in your personal on-line networking you need to bear in mind the effect your posts could have on Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

Important Rules

Think before you post on social media. Do not say anything, post views or opinions that you would not be prepared to discuss face to face with the person you are speaking about and discuss and defend with anyone who sees it.

Remember that once you have said something it may be seen by millions including the press and could be re-tweeted around the world in minutes. Once it is published on the internet you have no control over where it might end up.

Keep your messages professional, polite and positive.

Remember to try to keep social media posts and texts separate – many people use social media to post comments that they would previously have texted someone privately;

Don't enter into unhelpful online arguments; remember all of your followers or friends will be witnessing this online. Ignore people or block them if they persist in vexatious comments.

Don't post on social media when you are "tired" or under the influence of alcohol. It's probably sensible to turn off your phone at any time when you think your judgement may be impaired.

Do not allow anyone else access to your social media accounts, protect your passwords, especially if you use a public computer.

Social Media terms explained

Blog
Term derived from Weblog i.e an internet log or diary

Blogosphere
All the Blogs on the Internet

Community of Practice
Group of people who are members of an online 'club' because they have a role or an interest in an area of work

Direct Message
A message sent via Twitter to someone who follows you or who you follow.

Facebook
An example of social networking

Flikr
Photo sharing site

Follower
Someone who has chosen to follow you on Twitter

Friend
Someone who you have allowed to access your Facebook page. Not necessarily a real friend.

Forum
A virtual discussion area

#Hashtag
A hashtag or # is a way of denoting a keyword which can be used as a search term on Twitter.

Instagram
A platform for sharing photos and videos

Instant Messaging
A conversation with one other person via for example Microsoft Live Messenger or Yahoo Messenger. A conversation which, if you indicate that you are available for a chat is more immediate that e mail and easier to type than a text

Microblog
Short blog e.g. Twitter using a maximum of 140 characters

Pintrest
A virtual pinboard for creating and sharing images

RebelMouse
A free service that connects to your accounts at services such as Facebook, Twitter and/or Instagram. It integrates all your SM Tweets, postings and blogs automatically into one page, boosting your SM presence without you doing anything extra as it 'runs in the background'. It will save you having to tweet your blogs etc. to get more prominence on search engines.

Retweet
To forward a Tweet received on Twitter
16

RSS feeds or Really Simple Syndication feeds
Messages from websites informing you that new information is available so that you don't have to keep checking the website for updates

Social Bookmarking
A way of saving and sharing all your favourite sites on the web, for example delicious

Social networking
Facebook etc

Snapchat
A photo messaging application for photos, videos, drawings and text

Spam
Electronic junk mail

Trending
Current popular people or conversations as in trending on Twitter now…

Troll
Someone who disrupts online communities or discussions through un helpful or irrelevant posts

Tweet
A message sent on Twitter

Tweety Hall
A virtual gathering place for councillors with Twitter accounts

Twitter
An example of microblogging

Vimeo
A platform for sharing videos and photographs

Whats App
A Whats App group that has eight or more participants is considered to be a social networking group and will be subject to the same rules as Facebook and Twitter. A Whats App group that has less than 8 participants is considered to be a private group.

Wiki
A tool which enables anyone to add or edit content on a website

Wikkipedia
Online Encyclopedia which works using this method and is therefore not always accurate

You Tube
A platform for sharing videos and photographs