DRAFT
Social Media Policy

Policy Number	Version	Owner	Doc No.	PDF No.	Date Published	Review Due	Review Team
	1	TA	69456				SMT/ Personnel Committee

Distribution:

Internal: All SCC Staff
External: Website/Members/Partners

1. Policy Statement:

1.1. This policy provides Members and council staff with the Council's expectations about the use of social media such as emails, blogs, wikis, social networking websites, podcasts, forums, message boards or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other relevant social media websites.

2. Background:

2.1. The Council will encourage the use of social media for the purposes of:

2.1.1. Providing and exchanging information about services
2.1.2. Supporting local democracy
2.1.3. Gathering citizen insights and managing citizen relationships
2.1.4. Promoting cultural events or tourism for the area
2.1.5. Supporting community cohesion, neighbourliness and resilience
2.1.6. Creating internal communications, learning and development

2.2. This policy outlines the standards the Council requires Members and staff to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which the Council will monitor the use of social media and actions to be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.

2.3. This policy supplements and should be read in conjunction with all other policies and procedures adopted by the Council, including the Equal Opportunities Policy, Acceptable Use of the Internet and Email Policy, Data Protection Policy, Disciplinary Procedure and Code of Conduct For members

2.4. This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

3. Who is covered by this policy:

3.1. This policy covers all individuals working at all levels within the Council, including all elected and co-opted Members, the Clerk to the Council and all other staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

4. The scope of this policy:

4.1. The Council has a website and uses Social Media and email to communicate both internally and externally.
4.2. Over time the Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur this Social Media Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements that it uses to communicate with people who live in, work in and visit the City.
4.3. The Council will always try to use the most effective channels for its communications.

4.4. All members and staff are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the reputation, privacy, confidentiality and interests of the Council, its services, staff, partners and community.

4.5. Serious breaches of this policy by staff may be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure or Members Code of Conduct. The Council may take disciplinary action in respect of unlawful, libelous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually orientated or racially offensive comments by the staff. Breach of the policy by volunteers will result in the Council no longer using their services and if necessary, appropriate action will be taken.

4.6. Behaviour required by the Members' Code of Conduct shall apply to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication – the principles of this code are - selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

4.7. Members will bear in mind that inappropriate conduct can still attract adverse publicity, even where the code does not apply. Remarks are easily withdrawn, apologised for and forgotten when made in person, but posting them on the internet means that they have been published in a way that cannot be contained.

4.8. Online content should be objective, balanced, informed and accurate.

4.9. Members must be aware that their profile as a Member means the more likely it is they will be seen as acting in an official capacity when blogging or networking. It must be remembered that communications on the internet are permanent and public. When communicating in a 'private' group it should be ensured that the Council would be content with the statement should it be made public.

5. Use and Monitoring:

5.1. Staff and Members must not allow their interaction on any websites or blogs to damage their working relationships with others. They must not make any derogatory, discriminatory, defamatory or offensive comments about other staff, Members, the Council or about the people, businesses and agencies that the Council works with and serves.

5.2. Posts must not contain anyone's personal information

5.3. If staff or Members blog or tweet personally and not in their role as a councilor or staff, they must not act, claim to act or give the impression that they are acting as a representative of the Council, and where possible a disclaimer should be included to show this clearly . They should not include web links to official Council websites as this may give or reinforce the impression that they are representing the Council.

5.4. All staff and Members must ensure that they use Council facilities appropriately. If using a Council-provided website, blog site or social networking area, any posts made will be viewed as made in an official capacity. Do not use Council facilities for personal or political blogs.

5.5. The Council will appoint a nominated person as moderator – the Business and Communications Manager - who will be responsible for posting and monitoring of the content on Council pages and ensure compliance with the Social Media Policy. The moderator will have authority to immediately without notice or comment, remove any posts from the Council's social media pages if they are deemed to be inflammatory or of a defamatory or libelous nature.
Such posts will also be reported to the Hosts (e.g Facebook) and to the City Clerk. Alleged breaches of this policy by Members will be reported by the moderator to the City Clerk for consideration.

5.6. The Business and Communications Manager will maintain and update the Council's website. The website may be used to:-

      5.6.1. Post notices and minutes of meetings

      5.6.2. Advertise events and activities

      5.6.3. Post good news stories

      5.6.4. Link to appropriate websites or press pages if those sites meet the Council's expectations of conduct

      5.6.5. Advertise SCC vacancies

      5.6.6. Retweet or 'share' information from partners e.g. Police, library, district council etc.

      5.6.7. Announce new information appropriate to the Council

      5.6.8. Post or share information promoting bodies for community benefit such as schools, Scouts, sports clubs and community groups

      5.6.9. Post other items as the Council sees fit

5.7. Facebook Twitter and other social media. may be used to support the website and its information as above

5.8. Staff and Members are responsible for what they post. They are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published e-mail address which is used for Council business.

5.9. All social media sites in use should be checked on a regular basis to ensure that the security settings are in place.

6. Some Do's and Don'ts of Social Media:

Staff and Members must:

6.1. Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent

6.2. If the post is representing the Council ensure your role is clear

6.3. Never make false or misleading statements

6.4. Never present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment. They must protect the good reputation of the Council

6.5. Be mindful of the information posted on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council

6.6. Keep the tone of comments respectful and informative, never condescending or 'loud'. Use sentence case format, not capital letters, do not write in red to emphasise points

6.7. Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks. Language and comments that may be deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief should not be published on any social media site

6.8. Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications

6.9. Never post comments that they would not be prepared to make in writing or face to face

6.10. Never name an individual third party unless you have written permission to do so

6.11. Seek permission to publish original photographs or video from the persons or organisations in the video or photographs before they are uploaded. You must check that there is parental permission before photos of children are used

6.12. Respect the privacy of other Member's, staff and residents

6.13. Never post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations such as libel and copyright

6.14. Spell and grammar check everything

6.15. Comply with relevant Data Protection Legislation

7. Other Points:

7.1. Residents and Members should be aware that not all communication through social media requires a response, although an acknowledgement should be made if appropriate.

7.2. Reports of any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should be reported to the Clerk for referral to the moderator and/or Council as required.

8. Review of Policy:

8.1. The Policy will be reviewed annually.

9. Staff Acknowledgement:

9.1. Staff will be asked to sign acknowledgement of having read this policy using HR database