

# Human Resources

# Social Media Policy



## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Definition .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. Scope.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Personal Use of Social Media.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5. Confidentiality.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6. Monitoring Use of Social Media at work.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>7. Disciplinary Action over Social Media Use .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>8. Using Social Media on behalf of the Council.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Appendix A - Social Media: Editorial Policy</b>	

# SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

## I. Introduction

I.1. The term 'Social Media' encompasses a range of digital technologies that enable people to share information, build relationships and share opinions. The Council recognises the benefits social media can bring to the organisation, by offering a new means of raising awareness, building relationships and delivering services to the community via sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

I.2. This Policy aims to:

- ensure that guidance is given to prevent the misuse of social media by employees;
- ensure that guidance is given to ensure that personal usage does not bring the Council into disrepute; and
- protect the Council's data, its employees, its customers and any information held on any of the systems and equipment used by Council employees.
- advise employees of the acceptable use of social media in the conduct of Council business

I.3. All conduct on social media channels must accord with these existing policies

Code of Conduct for Employees

Combined Safeguarding Policy for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

Communication policy

Data Protection Act

Disciplinary Standards

Harassment and Bullying Policy

RIPA Policy (See intranet RIPA )

I.4. Online conduct should not differ from offline conduct in terms of respect for others. Employees should always be professional and sensible and any content found to breach Council policies and expected standards of behaviour may result in disciplinary action.

I.5. The principles of this policy must also be taken into account by Councillors when they use social media in their official capacity. The implications of Councillors failing to follow these requirements are dealt with in guidance issued by the Monitoring Officer to the Council, which can be found here.

## 2. Definitions

2.1. 'Social Media' refers to all types of electronic media whereby people can discuss and talk freely to each other over an open network.

- 2.2. Common examples of such networks are Facebook and Twitter. It also encompasses technologies such as messaging services such as SnapChat, video sharing sites such as YouTube, or blogging sites such as Tumblr and WordPress.
- 2.3. The term 'Personal Use' refers to using Social Media in your own name or with your own account.
- 2.4. The term 'material' refers to electronic imagery, text or a video clip.
- 2.5. The term 'devices' refers to laptops, tablets, note books,, and mobile and smart phones and wearable technology.

### **3. Scope**

- 3.1. This policy covers all employees and workers of the Council.
- 3.2. This policy covers those engaged from employment agencies and volunteers with the Council.
- 3.3. Whilst this policy does not cover third party service providers, the Council would expect professional conduct when referring to business dealings with the Council
- 3.4. For ease of reference, the term 'employee' used in this policy also refers to workers, agency workers and volunteers.

### **4. Personal Use of Social Media**

- 4.1 This must be limited to out of work hours, i.e. during lunch breaks. The organisation understands that employees may wish to access social media while they are at work. This is acceptable, provided employees limit their use of social media to their official breaks.
- 4.2 The image you project on social media may reflect on the Council and the job that you do. Employees should be mindful when making a comment in a private group as this could be shared or re-tweeted to a broader audience. You should not post anything that could adversely damage the image of the Council or have the potential to do so. For example:
  - criticising or arguing with colleagues online where there is reference to the Council, or that could be categorised as bullying or harassment making defamatory or unprofessional comments about individuals or organisations;
  - posting images that are inappropriate or link to inappropriate content, using either text, imagery or video material,

- using images of the workplace, colleagues, Council documents or logos without permission
- making offensive or derogatory comments about another's protected characteristics related to sex, gender, race, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, religion, beliefs, or age

This list is not exhaustive

4.3 You may still be identifiable as a Council employee even if you have not provided your job title or place of work. In such circumstances disciplinary action may be appropriate.

## 5. Confidentiality

5.1 Employees must be sure not to breach confidentiality by divulging any personal or sensitive information through social media. Such unauthorised disclosure of confidential information includes:

- revealing commercial information
- discussing the organisation's confidential information (such as particular working relations with customers or colleagues, or its future business plans that have not yet been communicated to the public); or
- disclosing confidential information about an individual (such as a colleague or customer contact), or an organisation

5.2 If you do discuss your work on social media (for example, giving opinions on their specialism, or the sector in which you operate), you should make it clear that your views are personal and not those of the Council. All views expressed should be proportionate and measured.

5.3 Employees should be mindful when making a comment in a private group as this could be shared or re-tweeted to a broader audience.

5.4 As an employee, if your role is politically restricted you should not state your political preferences or say anything that compromises your impartiality via social media (see 'Terms and Conditions' for more information on Politically Restricted posts).

## 6. Monitoring Use of Social Media at work

6.1 The Council reserves the right to monitor employees' internet usage at work.

6.2 The Council considers that valid reasons for checking an employee's internet usage include concerns, including whistleblowing disclosures, that the employee has:

- been using social media websites or excessive use of the internet for non-work purposes when he/she should be working; or
  - acted in a way that is in breach of the guidelines set out in this policy.
- 6.3 The Council reserves the right to retain information that it has gathered on employees' use of the internet for a minimum period of one year\*\*\*\*.
- 6.4 Access to social media websites may be withdrawn in any case of misuse.

## **7. Disciplinary Action over Social Media Use**

- 7.1. All employees are required to adhere to this policy. Employees should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action. This would include inappropriate social use of the internet outside the workplace if it brings the Council's reputation into disrepute or if there is a breach of this policy.
- 7.2. The use of social media to gather information about individuals to facilitate a recruitment decision, for example, is not allowed.
- 7.3. In certain circumstances, serious breaches of this policy and failure to comply, for example, incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity causing serious reputational damage to the Council or the potential to cause serious reputational damage to the Council, may amount to gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal.

## **8. Using Social Media on behalf of the Council**

- 8.1 Employees who use social media as part of their job, specifically those who are responsible for maintaining the official Twitter and Facebook accounts for the Council, must adhere to the Council's Social Media Editorial Policy (see Appendix A). Employees should use the same safeguards and apply the same standards as they would with any other form of communication about the organisation in the public sphere.
- 8.2 In particular if an employee is using social media as part of a criminal investigation they must not do so unless they have received specific training:
- Training will include, but will not be limited to, the restrictions imposed under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and the Council's Policy under that act (The RIPA Policy).
  - Failure to comply with these requirements may lead to the employee committing a criminal offence and/or disciplinary action.
- 8.3 Any communications that employees make in a professional capacity through social media must not bring the organisation into disrepute, for example, by:

- criticising or arguing with customers, colleagues or rivals;
- making defamatory or unprofessional comments about individuals, other organisations or groups;
- posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content.
- making offensive or derogatory comments about another's protected characteristics related to sex, gender, race, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, religion, beliefs, or age

8.4 When engaging with customers or organisations on behalf of the Council through Social Media, always remember that you are representing the Council. Employees should represent the Council ethically and with honesty and integrity.

8.5 Remember that your account is official Chelmsford City Council output and so all tweets, posts, pins and so on need to be consistent with this. You should only post, tweet, pin etc in your role at the Council and focus on areas relevant to your specialism, avoiding personal interests or issues that do not relate to your work role.

8.6 When participating in discussions or answering questions online, you need to communicate just like you would when 'off-line'. Employees need to ensure that what they post is accurate, not misleading or derogative of a product, the Services, the Council, a partner organisation, or a person.

8.7 Employees need to understand and respect copyright, disclosure, confidentiality and financial laws.

8.8 Non-compliance of this Policy and the Council's associated policies may result in disciplinary action being taken.

## **Appendix A**

# **Social Media: Editorial Policy**

## **Corporate Communications**

### **Introduction**

Chelmsford City Council's Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, Pinterest and other social media accounts have been set up to provide information on news, services, events and job vacancies. We also provide alerts and updates on service changes and disruptions, live election results, publicity campaigns and consultations. We will not, however, report or comment on any political matters.

### **Personal social media accounts**

Employees should read the Social Media Policy for guidance and information on personal use of Social Media.

### **Official accounts**

We approve a limited number of social media accounts, aiming for a coherent, stable transmission of different and distinctive voices. Accounts need to be monitored daily by a senior member of staff in your department. Tweets, photographs and Facebook posts should be checked/approved by a senior member of staff beforehand in order to provide an opportunity to correct/delete them if there are any editorial issues surrounding them.

Below are the best practice points that should be followed by any department wanting or already with an official account:

- 1.** Before you set up a social media account, first speak to your department manager and establish who will monitor your account. You then need to send an email to Corporate Communications. They will then go through the setting-up process with you. They will also need to keep a central log of your account username, password and name of the person in charge of that account. If you have an account already setup and you haven't sent them these details, please do. A central log of account details is necessary to ensure we can still operate in the event of an emergency or if the account holder leaves the authority without passing the details on.
- 2.** Remember that your account is official Chelmsford City Council output and so



all tweets, posts, pins and so on need to be consistent with this. You should only post, tweet, pin etc in your role at the Council and focus on areas relevant to your specialism, avoiding personal interests or issues that do not relate to your work role.

3. This doesn't stop you using an informal tone and engaging with your audience. A useful guide on how informal you can be is by asking yourself the question: "Would I be comfortable saying this on the radio?" There have been examples where tweets have become too jokey/personal/off-topic and the impact of these instances could in the future be magnified as they may appear elsewhere, out of context - in addition to your followers. Crucially, don't be tempted to mistake an informal tone as something that reduces the need for impartiality – normal Chelmsford City Council editorial standards apply.

### **Sharing and retweeting**

Be cautious about re-tweeting or sharing the words of other people, as it can give the appearance that you are endorsing them. This may not be a problem, but it's worth checking their account bio first if you are unsure who they are. Try to share, pin or retweet information that you think would be of interest or use to our residents. People should not be offended if we don't retweet something they want us to. As a trusted authority, any sharing of information could be seen as endorsement of a particular view, individual or organisation, and it's important that we remain impartial and protect the Council's reputation.

Council accounts may receive requests to retweet or follow from businesses, charities and causes. As a rule, unless these are directly affiliated with a Council event or service (for example, the Mayor's charity, a theatre company performing at the Civic Centre and tweeting about that particular performance) we would not do so.

### **Following**

People should not be offended if we don't follow them on social media. It doesn't mean we don't like them or are not interested in what they have to say, it's just that the numbers can get too high for us to manage. On many social media platforms, there is a set limit as to how many accounts you can follow.

Feel free to follow people who provide information that is pertinent to your work as a local authority (for example central government accounts, local media, and our partners) or those whose information we can pass on for the benefit of many local people. However, just because we follow someone, retweet or share their information, it doesn't mean that we endorse them.

An issue with Twitter is that users have to be following you before you can send them a direct message, for example to request a telephone number that they may not wish to post publicly. It is fine to follow others or to request that they follow you for this purpose – just let them know the reason for your request.

### **Monitoring accounts, responding and replying**

Don't feel you have to reply/respond to messages from followers – though feel free to do so, it's the key way of engaging with people. Try and respond to as many replies or comments as you can. Our accounts are not currently monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so it is possible that you may miss posts in busy social media traffic.

### **Pre-election period or 'Purdah'**

In the six-week run up to an election - local, general or European - councils have to be very careful not to do or say anything that could be seen in any way to support any political party or candidate. You can continue to use social media to publish important service announcements but they must not be at all political or mention any political party or Member.

### **General Rules and Guidelines** (see also the Social Media Policy for further guidance)

Most online communities have their own rules and guidelines, which we will always follow. We reserve the right to remove any contributions that break the rules or guidelines of the relevant community, or any of the following:

- Be civil, tasteful and relevant.
- Do not post messages that are unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive.
- Do not swear.
- Do not post content copied from elsewhere, for which you do not own the copyright.
- Do not post the same message, or very similar messages, more than once (also called "spamming").
- Do not publicise your, or anyone else's, personal information, such as contact details.
- Do not advertise products or services other than those of the Council.
- Do not impersonate someone else.

Version Number	Creation Date	Changes Made	Changes Made By:	Date of Changes
3	May 2017	<p>Clarifying of the purpose of the policy to ensure that all employees are aware of the acceptable use of social media in the conduct of Council business</p> <p>Clarification of the scope of the policy</p> <p>To include link to Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act policy</p> <p>Guidance in policy to that the principles of the policy must be taken into account by Councillors when they use social media in their official capacity.</p> <p>Reinforcement of potential disciplinary action for inappropriate behaviour if potential for link with Council be identified</p> <p>Statement which confirms that employees should not use social media to gather information during the recruitment process.</p>	HR	May 2017
2	Feb 2015	Amended Disability Confidential logo	HR Team	05/12/2016
1	Feb 2015	-	H Dungate	02/02/2015