Telford & Wrekin Council

Social Media Policy

Acceptable Use for Employees

Introduced: April 2013

Developed by: People Services

What is social media?

'Social media is the term commonly given to internet and mobile-based channels and tools that allow users to interact with each other and share opinions and content. As the name implies, social media involves the building of communities or networks and encouraging participation and engagement'.
[Chartered Institute of Public Relations Social Media Panel]

For the purposes of this policy social media includes the use of both **external** facing channels such as 'twitter, facebook etc and **internal** channels such as discussion forums, Sharepoint, blogs, OCS etc. The same standards apply to both external and internal channels.

Social media provides the council with a range of opportunities and benefits such as:

- ☑ Increased engagement with customers, employees, public sector partners and local organisations
- ☑ Responding to local concerns in real time (flood updates, road/school closures, cabinet decisions etc)
- ☑ Promoting services, events, campaigns, projects and important council business

Accessing the Council's new social media pages

Employees will now be able to follow all the latest council twitter feeds, facebook promotions and gain regular updates on daily council and local news by logging onto the council's new social media site available through the intranet and managed by the council's Corporate Communication Teams. You can access this new site by clicking on Newsroom on the 'Quick Links section' on e-Council.

Why do we need a Social Media Policy?

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that employees are provided with clear guidance on what is **acceptable** and what is **not acceptable** when using social media.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- ☑ The Employee Code of Conduct
- ☑ Corporate Information Security Policy

The same rules that apply to your actions in general, as found in the Employee Code of Conduct, apply to your conduct online.

The council respects the rights of employees and, by and large, what you do in your own time is your concern.   However, actions in or outside of work that affect your work performance, the work of others, or the council's interests are a suitable focus for council policy.

The lines between public and private, personal and professional use are hazy in online social networks. This policy covers the responsibilities of employees both inside and outside of work.

Using social media for work purposes:

Authorised Employees

There are a number of employees already authorised to formally use social media websites on behalf of the council as part of their day to day activities, for example the Corporate Communications Teams, the Leisure Services Marketing Manager etc. For those already authorised please follow the guidance for personal use of social media outlined overleaf and in addition please ensure you:

- ☑ Abide by the Employee Code of Conduct. If you have any uncertainty about publishing something online, this document may help or ask an member of the Corporate Communications Team

- ☑ Bear in mind the council's Information Security Policy guidelines.

- ☑ For the council's protection as well as your own, it is critical that you stay within the legal framework and be aware that libel, defamation, copyright and data protection laws apply.

- ☑ Be aware that content on social media websites may be subject to Freedom of Information requests.

- ☑ Ensure you strike the right balance and that social media doesn't impact on your performance in relation to other priority areas of work required as part of your day job.

Starting a Social Media Network?

If you want to start a social network or blog for council purposes such as participation, engagement and consultation about the council, and want to become an 'authorised employee, you should discuss this with your manager and then consult with the Corporate Communications Team.

A short business case will help you plan to use social media effectively; this should be shared with the Corporate Communications Team and should include details of:

- ☑ What you wish to communicate and your target audience
- ☑ Your aims for the social network or blog and why you think a social network or blog is the right platform for communicating your messages
- ☑ What other channels of communication you will use to support your use of social networks
- ☑ How many times a day you intend to update/check the social network or blog
- ☑ Which other officers will have access to edit the social network or blog when you are unable to update it due to sickness/annual leave
- ☑ How you intend to keep records of the data that you post onto your social media site or blog

Using social media for personal use:

When employees use social media for personal use, either at work[1] or in a personal capacity, the personal image you project in social media may adversely reflect on the image of the authority.

When using social media for personal purposes, you must not imply you are speaking for the council. Avoid use of your council e-mail address, logos or other council identification. Make it clear that what you say is representative of your personal views only. You need to be aware of your association with the council and that some readers may interpret your postings to be council opinion. This includes posting on any opinions you may have in respect to other council officers and/or customers.

If you choose to identify yourself as a council employee within a social network, show yourself in the best possible light and remember that you are now connected to your colleagues, managers and members of the public who may also be customers of the council. You should therefore ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work at the council.

- ☑ Think twice. You should use mature discretion in all personal communications in social media.

- ☑ Know your obligations. You must comply with other council policies when using social media. For example, you should be careful not to breach council confidentiality.

- ☑ Show respect to all. You should be respectful of the authority and your fellow employees

- ☑ Don't post any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claims for damages. If employees are found to be posting such information you may face misconduct/gross misconduct action in accordance with the council's disciplinary process

- ☑ Consider the impact of accepting personal friendships from any children, young people or vulnerable adults met in a work capacity

- ☑ Be aware that your profile information is now in the public domain and if completed with your employment details, e.g. work for Telford and Wrekin Council... could attract unwanted contacts or requests for views that are not appropriate

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[1] Personal use at work is only permitted in non work hours, e.g. before the time you state as starting work on your flexi sheet, in your lunch break or after the time you state that you finished work on your flexi sheet

Line Manager Responsibilities

☑ Line managers should ensure that team members accessing social media on behalf of the council have read this policy and highlight and arrange to respond to any training needs prior to use of social media.

☑ Line managers should monitor all employee access to social media sites as part of their everyday management to ensure compliance with the requirements of this policy and any other specific policies relating to their team.

☑ Line managers should deal with non-compliance and, depending on the circumstances, may need to involve a Senior Business Partner from the People Services Team.

❖ The council will not be able to accept liability for any actions arising out of employee's personal use of social networking sites and may take additional action against the employee.

❖ Always remember that posting to social media sties could mean your comments being permanently available and open to being re-published in the media.

❖ The council will monitor use of social media sites to ensure acceptable use however in doing so we recognise social media has a key role to play in future communications with both employees and customers and it is against this backdrop that monitoring will be undertaken