

Social Media Policy Draft for use across EHDC and HBC

Section 1 - Purpose

- 1.1 The Council recognises that the use of online social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc) has become a significant part of everyday social life for many people. It is important that all employees use social networking sites safely and responsibly in order to protect themselves and the reputation of the Council.
- 1.2 The policy sets out the Councils' expectations of employees when using social networking sites and good practice recommendations to avoid misuse or risk to the Council.
- 1.3 Whilst at work, employees' access to the internet is provided primarily for business use. The Council recognises that many employees use the internet for personal purposes in their own time to participate in social networking on websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.
- 1.4 The Council wants to encourage better IT skills among staff and with this in mind staff are able to access the internet and sites such as social media to advance their IT skills providing it does not impact on workloads and performance. But before accessing internet sites and/ or downloading staff must make sure they are aware of and follow the IT policy. Breaches of the policy may lead to disciplinary action.
- 1.5 Appendix A & B in this document provided a set of guidelines for staff who need to use social media as part of their role within the council and details of using social network sites to deliver services in a professional way, in addition to the application form to assist employees setting up sites.

Section 2 - Policy

- 2.1 This Policy should be read in conjunction with the IT Acceptable Use Policy. In specific cases of cyberbullying, reference must be made to the Council's Code of Conduct.
- 2.1 Where it is believed that an employee has failed to comply with the policies and guidance related to IT Acceptable Use and Social Networking, the Council's Disciplinary Procedure will apply. If the employee is found to have breached any policy they may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Section 3 - Personal conduct

- 3.1 The Council respects an employee's right to a private life. However, this must be balanced with the confidentiality of Council business and ensuring its reputation is protected.

- 3.2 Employees should be aware that there is a clear distinction of acceptable use where they have identified themselves as an employee of the Council. If an employee adds any information to a social networking profile that identifies them as an employee of the Council or there is reference made to the Council during activity on social networking sites, they must ensure that any such activity does not breach the Council's Code of Conduct Policy.
- 3.3 If an employee has identified themselves knowingly or unknowingly as an employee of the Council, it is expected that whilst partaking in social networking they:
- do not conduct themselves in a way that may be detrimental to the reputation of the Council and;
 - take care not to allow their interaction on social networking sites to damage working relationships between members of staff and clients/service users of the Council.
 - Adhere to the additional Social Media Guidance if they use social media as part of their Council duties.

Section 4 - Dos & don'ts

- 4.1 The following are examples of good and bad practice in relation to online social networking and employees are requested to adhere to these guidelines whilst using such sites **in their own time or for business purposes** (this list is not exhaustive):
- 4.2. Dos
- Consider everything that you post as 'public', even in private online discussions.
 - Keep personal and professional social networking as separate as possible (even though Facebook requires all pages, including personal and business pages, to be linked to a personal account).
 - Consider how you present yourself on online social networking sites.
 - Consider the appropriateness of your profile picture. This is displayed even when your information is set to private.
 - Consider who you accept as a friend on social networking sites. They will have access to your profile and personal details about you.
 - Consider whether the contents of your 'wall' or 'public' information would be more appropriate in a private message.
 - Familiarise yourself with the privacy settings so that you can restrict access to information that you consider to be personal.
 - Be Considerate to colleagues that are friends before tagging them in any photos. They may be unhappy to be shown taking part in a particular activity.

If an employee has identified themselves as an employee of the Council, they must:

- Adhere to the code of conduct in relation to political neutrality which includes any actions showing political bias..
- Where relevant, adhere to the [politically restricted posts](#) guidelines.
- Make your line manager or an appropriate person aware if you have concerns about information that you have seen on a social networking site.
- Adhere to the additional Social Media Guidance if using social media as part of their Council duties.

4.3 Don'ts

- Discuss work online, especially do not conduct online conversations involving customers, managers or colleagues.
- Accept friend requests from, or build or pursue relationships with suppliers or customers that could cause a conflict of interest with the Council. Put work related information on 'wall' posts for example: names, email addresses, postal addresses or phone numbers unless this has been approved by your line manager as part of your agreed work duties.
- Put sensitive or confidential work related information on social networking sites, especially if it identifies customers, managers, colleagues or the Council.
- Release confidential or unauthorised information relating to Council business, particularly in relation to policy or consultation.
- Post anything that the Council may deem to offend, insult or humiliate others, particularly on the basis of gender, disability, age, ethnic or national origin, marital status, religion or belief, sexual orientation, trade union activity or responsibility for dependents.
- Post anything that the Council may deem to be seen as threatening, intimidating or abusive to colleagues, managers, service users or clients. Such posts or messages may be viewed as cyberbullying, which will be managed using the Council's Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure.
- Impersonate any other person or use another persons account without their consent. This could be viewed as an invasion of privacy.
- Upload any information that may bring the reputation of the Council into disrepute.
- Use social networking sites for political purposes or specific work related campaigning purposes where you have identified yourself as a Council employee
- Use the Council's logo or any other branding material on personal messages or anywhere else on an online social networking site, unless this is necessary as part of your job and has had prior agreement from your line manager.
- Use social networking sites as a tool for discussing Council business unless this has been officially endorsed.

Section 5 - Expectations of employees

- 5.1 There is an expectation that all employees will report issues related to abuse, misuse or misconduct that they have seen on a social networking site to their line manager as soon as possible. This may include, but is not limited to;
- comments from employees who are posting information on social networking sites whilst off sick, the content of which may indicate that the absence is not genuine.
 - comments about a colleague, manager, service user or client which the Council deems to be unacceptable.
 - any information that may be detrimental to the Council.
- 5.2 Employees who report such incidents will be expected to cooperate with any potential investigation including providing evidence, providing a witness statement and potentially attending a disciplinary hearing.

Section 6 - Inappropriate behaviour

- 6.1 Employees may not fully consider the ramifications of posting something on a social networking site, for example who may have access to it and the difficulties of removing it. Employees must exercise a common sense approach when using social networking sites. Anything that is written on a social networking site is essentially in the public domain, even if privacy settings have been applied or material is posted on a closed profile or group.
- 6.2 The Council considers that acceptable online conduct should not differ from that which is considered acceptable offline conduct. For example, pictures that would not be regarded as acceptable for sharing in a face to face workplace setting would therefore not be acceptable when placed in an online setting.
- 6.3 Any inappropriate behaviour, such as that detailed within this policy, that is brought to the line manager's attention will need to be investigated and managed in accordance with Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

Section 7 – Related policy

- IT Internet Usage
- IT Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary Procedure

Section 8 – Policy review

The HR team will review the policy in consultation with the relevant representative bodies.

Appendix A)

Guidance for using Social Media to Deliver Services

Section 1 – Introduction

- 1 This document provides guidance intended to help employees use social networking sites to deliver services in a responsible and managed environment, maintaining the council's corporate messages and safeguarding reputation and perceptions. This should be read in addition to the main Social Media Policy Document – promoting safe and responsible use.
- 1.2 Existing guidance and responsibilities that must be adhered to in relation to this guidance:
 - IT guidance on social networking – promoting safe and responsible use.
The corporate guidance on [acceptable use of email, internet and intranet](#) must be applied equally to social media and online engagement.
 - The Council's [Code of Conduct](#), in which political neutrality is a key element, strictly applies.
- 1.3 Users must also be aware of the legislative framework of Data Protection, including ensuring they have obtained relevant permissions for use of audio, video or photographic images on the web.

As with other forms of communication, the legal framework of Libel, Defamation and Copyright also apply. Never comment on anything related to legal matters or on-going litigation or anything that is clearly private and confidential.

Section 2 -Creating a social media account for Council services

- 2 The applicant must first complete the social media agreement form (Appendix 2) and submit this to the Digital Content Manager and/or the Web Content Officer.
- 2.1 The Digital Content Manager and/or the Web Content Officer will review and discuss the service requirements with the applicant. If there the social media account is approved, then a named editorial owner for the page will need to be agreed (person responsible for the maintenance of the page).

- 2.2 If all requirements are met and agreed by the applicant and the Digital Content Manager and/or the Web Content Officer, the agreement will be approved. If the agreement is not approved the Digital Content Manager and/or the Web Content Officer, will advise on alternative ways to promote your campaign with input from the wider Communications Team where necessary.
- 2.3 All social media accounts must be registered with the Corporate Web Team and the Social Media Agreement must be signed by all relevant parties before the creation of any professional social media account. Any account created before an approved Social Media Agreement is in place will be classed as breaching this Agreement and the Social Media Policy and will have to be deleted.

Section 3 -Social media account identity

- 3.1 It should be clear to users whether the site they are interacting with is a Council account run by the Council for Council purposes.
- 3.2 Employees should avoid creating or endorsing "hybrid" sites which contain elements of both and which are likely to cause confusion, editorial problems and brand damage. For example, an employee's personal profile should not have Council URL or contain Council branding.

Section 4- Use of the Council logo

- 4.1 Authorisation must be obtained to use the Council's logo or agreed marketing brand for the service on a third party site. Remember that the Council logo is intended to give the impression that this is a genuine, authorised, presence so the nature of that presence should have a positive impact on the council brand.
- 4.2 Any logos should, where possible, contain links back to the relevant Council page. If this cannot be done technically, the link should be as close as possible to the logo.
- 4.3 Employees who have a query about the correct use of the Council's logo, should contact the Web Content or Communications Manager.

Section 5 -Link back to the Council website

- 5.1 The success of utilising social media relies on the Council engaging with users on the sites they visit and in the conversations they are having.
- 5.2 This is partly so that users who may consume little or no Council content or services can discover for themselves more of what we have to offer. We must always link back to the Council to encourage them to consume more content on our own website.

Section 6 - Level of engagement

- 6.1 During the application phase, employees will need to decide with the Digital Content Manager and/or the Web Content Officer regarding what level of engagement they want, what resources they will need to achieve it and over what period of time (as outlined in the Social Media Agreement). For example:

Will users be able to upload still, audio or video contributions?
Will users be able to add their own text comments?

If so,

How do you plan to engage with the community?
How do you plan to protect the Council brand?
Will you need to consider some additional moderation?
Do you have the necessary resources to do the job properly?

Section 7 - Tone of voice

- 7.1 Accuracy – any conversation that the Council has online will be widely accessible, shared or republished elsewhere and could be permanently available, so take time and consider the activity carefully. What is said must be factual, fair and accurate and must not be your personal opinion.
- 7.2 Honesty – be honest and say who you are and who you represent. What you say must be truthful and not misleading. Activity should be relevant to your position and staff should only use social media in a way that is appropriate to their role.
- 7.3 Respect – as an ambassador for the Council your comments must be respectful and relevant; they must not be offensive or cause any embarrassment to the Council and must uphold the Council's reputation.

Section 8 - Responding to hostile content

- 8.1 The general public using social media are not obliged to follow the same codes of conduct governing traditional media. There will be situations where employees will need to consider whether to respond, don't rush in but don't ignore negative comments. Take time to carefully consider the response and make sure the necessary approvals are in place.
- 8.2 Generally, if the comment or article is accurate and positive employees may wish to acknowledge and thank them for their comments.
- 8.3 If it is negative take a look at their other comments to see if the attack on the Council is a typical one, does it look like a rant or a satirical comment. If so, avoid responding but monitor their activity.

- 8.4 If someone is making a complaint about the Council or its services, do take into account the site's profile or importance and seek advice from the Digital Content Manager and/or the Web Content Office. Employees who are confident they can respond, should provide a good customer service response, and do so promptly, referring them to the relevant service contact or our website. Where further action / intervention may be required employees should raise this with their manager and in turn with the relevant team to enable an appropriate response
- 8.5 If it is clear that the author has misunderstood or their facts are wrong, do respond courteously with factual information but don't pick fights or get into an argument. If there are any doubts, please speak with the Digital Content Manager and/or the Web Content Officer.

Section 9 - Presumption against taking over responsibility on third party sites

- 9.1 The responsibility for measures of protection and intervention lies first with the social networking site itself. Officers should never set out to duplicate measures of protection and intervention which the social networking site already takes e.g. against illegal or harmful and offensive content, whether by using its own staff or by working with the community to alert them to breaches of the site's terms and conditions. In practice, different social networking sites offer different models of intervention in different areas.
- 9.2 There are some circumstances where the Council will need to plan and implement an additional "light touch" intervention, for example to remove comments which are likely to cause extreme offence.

Section 10 - Legal and rights issues

- 10.1 Before uploading Council material or inviting users to upload their user generated content to a page on a social networking site, ensure you are aware of, and comfortable with, the site's own terms and conditions. This is because by uploading content, it is likely that we are agreeing to be bound by its terms.
- 10.2 Employees need to make sure they have the necessary rights to any content that is put on third party sites - not only to ensure prevention of a breach in our agreements with rights holders but also because we are likely to be liable to the site itself if we post 'un-cleared' material.

Section 11 - Endorsing external content

- 11.1 When forwarding, 'liking' or "retweeting" a selection of a person's entries/posts or "tweets" it is unlikely to be a problem if "retweeting" a colleague's or partner organisations "tweet".
- 11.2 Views expressed about politics or a matter of controversial public policy should not be endorsed or in any way commented on.

- 11.3 Caution must be taken when "retweeting" or forwarding other third party content. Consider the risk to the Council by doing this as it may appear to be an endorsement of the original author's point of view.
- 11.4 It is not enough to write on your Social Media account that "retweeting" or forwarding content does not signify endorsement. Instead employees should consider adding additional comments to the "tweet", making it clear why it is being forwarded.

Section 12 - Advertising

- 12.1 Users generally appear to accept that advertisements on areas of Council branded social networking pages which are not under our editorial control (e.g. banner ads) are not our responsibility and are not connected with Council content.
- 12.2 Keep an eye on the full range of advertisements which appear on Council branded pages. Alert your communications officer if inappropriate advertisements appear on the same pages.

Section 13 - Site closure

- 13.1 It is important to have a clear plan from the start of how long the association between the Council and the site/profile/page will last. The presence may be tactical and handing over the space to the community may be desirable or it may be sensible to announce closure to its users and then shut the space down. It is incumbent on the person responsible for the presence to maintain the site or to arrange an exit.
- 13.2 Above all, we should not leave the site Council branded but neglected, carrying the risk to the brand without exercising any editorial control.
- 13.3 Speak with the Digital Content Manager and/or the Web Content Officer before shutting down an account as they will be able to advise on best practice.

Appendix B) –

Social Media Start Up (SMSU) form

Before referring this request to the web team for approval, you must have first completed the template below, or go directly to the electronic version to complete the application form

<http://intranet/forms/corporate-social-media-account-application-form>

We can help you to do this, if you feel that you need help. Just call us on 01730 234024.

Please provide a brief summary of the project/campaign for which you intend to use social media:

We are launching a campaign to:

With aims to achieve:

The key objectives using a social media account for this project/campaign are:

Tell us about your audience.

Who are they? Which sites/tools/channels do they prefer?

Our intended audience is:

We wish to set up an account using (please circle):

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

Other (please specify)

This account will benefit our intended audience because:

Does your project/campaign sufficiently warrant the creation of additional site/tool that might otherwise be promoted via existing central channels (e.g. the corporate website)?

Please state your case...

[Empty dashed box]

Please indicate how you intend to measure the relative success of the project/campaign.

This should equate with the realisation of your objectives.

We intend to measure (eg. 'Likes', followers, audience reach):

Because:

Have you identified suitably skilled individuals to act as the moderators for the given channel(s)? Yes / No

You will need to have the resources to update the account **regularly**. The best pages are updated with useful, relevant and timely information and create an ongoing conversation. You will need to have one designated member of staff who can update and check the account at least once a day.

Give their name and contact details here:

Moderator 1 **Extension No**

Moderator 2 **Extension No**

Who will fill in if they are sick/ on holiday?

Note: has the above person read through the social media policy document (link) and understood it and are they prepared to abide by it? Yes / No

Have you reviewed the council central sites/tools, as well as those provided by other services, to ensure there is no duplication? Yes / No

By setting up a social media account for the council you agree to the terms and conditions there within, in particular the section on moderator responsibilities. Yes / No

Sign here:.....

Deputy sign here:.....

Support

You will need your line manager's support to have the account(s), because they will have to support you spending time each day updating it.

You will also need to make one of the web team an administrator for your page, or give them log-in details, in case urgent action is required.

Line manager approval:

I am satisfied that the resources described above can be released to ensure that this social media campaign can be properly supported by my team.

Line manager signature:.....

Date:.....