



SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Northstowe Town Council



MAY 20, 2021
NORTHSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL
VERSION 1.0

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Introduction

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables Northstowe Town Council to interact in a way that improves the communications between the Council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

Northstowe Town Council has a Website, Facebook page and Twitter account and uses email to communicate. The Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. 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.

1. Scope of the policy

- 1.1. This policy is intended to assist and direct Council employees, including the Town Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer, Officers, including part-time, fixed-term and casual employees, (collectively referred to as employees in this policy), volunteers and members to make appropriate decisions about the use of social media, such as blogs, social networking sites, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn and other relevant social media websites.
- 1.2. In addition this policy outlines the standards Northstowe Town Council requires employees and volunteers to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which the Council will monitor an employee or volunteer's use of social media and the action the Council will take in respect to breaches of this policy.
- 1.3. All employees, volunteers and members are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the Council.
- 1.4. Breach of this policy by employees will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.

2. Responsibility for policy implementation

- 2.1. The Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
- 2.2. The Town Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risk to the Council's work.
- 2.3. All employees, volunteers and members should ensure that they take the time to read and understand this policy. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the Town Clerk and/or Mayor.
- 2.4. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Town Clerk.

3. Northstowe Town Council website

- 3.1. Where necessary, the Council and/or its employees may direct those contacting them to the Town Council website to provide the required information.
- 3.2. The Council will provide a link to a local groups own website.

4. Social media sites in Northstowe Town Council's name

- 4.1. When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.
- 4.2. Only the Town Clerk and nominated employees or volunteers (approved by the Town Clerk) are permitted to post material on a social media website in the Council's name or on behalf of the Council.
- 4.3. Communications from the Council must meet the following criteria:
 - a) Be civil, tasteful and relevant;
 - b) Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually orientated or racially offensive;
 - c) Not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which the Council do not own the copyright;
 - d) Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories you should discuss this with the Town Clerk and/or the Mayor
 - e) Not contain any personal information;
 - f) Not used for the dissemination of any political advertising.
- 4.4. In order to ensure that all discussions on the Council's social media platforms are respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives the following guidelines must be followed:
 - Be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarity, threats or abusive language will not be tolerated.

- Differing opinions and discussions of diverse ideas are encouraged but personal attacks on anyone, including the Council members or staff, will not be permitted.
 - Any employee, volunteer or member who feels they have been harassed or bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform the Town Clerk and/or the Mayor
- Do not escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.
- Do not discuss employees, volunteers or members without their prior approval.
- Share freely and be generous with official Council posts, but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.
- Stay on topic
- Refrain from using the Council's social media pages and/or accounts for commercial purposes or to advertise, market or sell products.
- Avoid publishing personal contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by unintended audiences.

4.5. All images used within social media posts must be those for which the Council owns the copyright or has the express written consent of the image owner.

4.5.1. When publishing images of individuals, the Council must obtain explicit consent from the data subject, or a legal guardian, prior to the publication of the image.

5. Using social media (sites and accounts not in Northstowe Town Council's name)

5.1. The Council recognises the importance of the internet and social media in shaping public thinking about our council and community. The Council also recognises the importance of its employees, volunteers and members joining in and helping shape local government conversation and direction through interaction on social media.

5.2. Before using social media in any matter which might affect the interests of the Council you must:

- a) Have read and understood this policy.
- b) Whether posting in a professional or personal capacity be considerate of the impact your contribution might have on people's perception of the Council.

6. Monitoring use of social media websites

6.1. Employees should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for Council purposes) may be monitored and, where

breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken against employees under our Disciplinary Procedure.

6.2. Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and the Council.

6.3. In particular a series case of uploading, posting forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material¹ on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, is likely to amount to gross misconduct:

- a) Pornographic material (that is writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);
- b) A false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;
- c) Material which is offensive, obscene, criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the Council, it's members or employees;
- d) Confidential information about the council or anyone else
- e) Any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil and whether for you or the Council); or
- f) Material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

Any such action will be addressed under the Disciplinary Procedure and for employees may result in summary dismissal.

6.4. Where evidence of misuse is found the Council may undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure, involving examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or managers involved in the investigation. If necessary such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.

6.5. If you notice any use of social media by other employees or volunteers in breach of this policy this must be reported to the Town Clerk and/or the Mayor.

¹ To note this list is not exhaustive

DOCUMENT HISTORY

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