



## **MACHYNLLETH TOWN COUNCIL**

### **Social Media Policy**

#### **(I) Introduction**

(1) Social Media is the term used to describe any websites or online applications that allow users to interact with each other by sharing or publishing information, opinions, research or commentary to a wider group.

(2) Social Media is about creating communities or networks, encouraging participation and engaging with each other.

(3) Anyone with a computer or internet connection can use Social Media such as Facebook and Twitter to freely and quickly publish views and information and to listen to and engage with those who read them.

(4) Over recent years, the evolution of Social Media has led to a fundamental shift in the way people, businesses and organisations communicate with each other.

(5) Because of the increasing use of Social Media, it is essential that the Council makes proactive use of them.

(6) Social Media offers new opportunities for the Council:

- to engage directly with the public
- to share Council news
- to seek views

(7) At the same time some of the obvious risks to the Council's reputation of making proactive use of Social Media should be identified. These risks include the fact that the Council cannot manage the material it releases through Social Media - once it has been mailed to an initial target audience, material can be posted and re-mailed, modified or changed anywhere through the networks of all individuals in that audience and beyond.

#### **(II) The Policy**

##### **2.1 Policy Statement**

(1) The purpose of this policy is to help employees and Councillors make appropriate decisions on the use of Social Media.

(2) The policy sets out the standards that the Council expects employees and Councillors to retain when using Social Media, the circumstances in which the use of Social Media is monitored and the action taken if the policy's conditions are found to have been breached.

## **2.2. Scope of the Policy**

(1) This policy applies to:

- Any Social Media account created in the Council's name
- Council officers / Councillors who use social websites as part of their work
- Officers / Councillors who make personal use of Social Media, including private groups, where this may have a negative impact on the reputation of the Council.

(2) All employees and Councillors are expected to comply with this policy and to protect the privacy, confidentiality and interests of the Council.

(3) If employees breach the conditions of this policy this can be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure and in serious cases could be regarded as gross misconduct leading to unjustified dismissal.

(4) If Councillors are in breach of the terms of this policy this is dealt with in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

## **2.3 Responsibility for implementing the policy**

(1) The Council has overall responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of this policy.

(2) The Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the policy.

(3) All employees and Councillors should ensure that they take the time to read and understand this policy. Any breaches of this policy should be notified to the Clerk.

(4) Questions about the content or implementation of this policy should be referred to the Clerk, who will liaise with Powys County Council's Monitoring Officer.

## **(II) Strategic Aims and Objectives**

(1) The aim of this policy is to safeguard and promote the reputation of the Council by providing a framework for making effective use of Social Media.

(2) Social Media should always be seen as a new and additional tool for use in communicating and engaging, alongside the more traditional forms of communication and engagement.

## **(IV) Language and Responses**

(1) Where possible messages communicated by the Council on Social Media shall be expressed bilingually in plain and simple Welsh and English.

(2) All responses posted by the Council in response to enquiries and / or comments regarding the Council's services are posted in the same language as the original query / comment.

(3) The Council cannot guarantee a prompt response to all comments being placed on Social Media.

(4) The Council reserves the right not to follow or to block followers at any time .

(5) The Council's Facebook account is updated during office hours, Monday - Friday only.

### **(V) Use of Social Media**

The Clerk / Facilities Manager and any Councillor to which the Clerk has delegated written authority may post material on a Social Media website in the name of the Council, and on its behalf, in accordance with the rules and scope of this policy.

### **(VI) Rules for the use of Social Media**

The general rule is that the same standards of conduct are expected if a member is online or not. In addition to normal legal duties, the following principles should be borne in mind:-

- Show respect for others
- Non-disclosure of confidential information
- No bullying, harassment, victimisation or intimidation of fellow Councillors, officers or the public
- No seeking of personal gain
- Remembering the principles of equality
- No encouragement of behaviour contrary to this Protocol by others
- Be careful not to be involved in the case of a personal vendeta against others

In addition:

(1) Do not upload, post or forward a link to any obscene, disgusting, discriminatory, disturbed, humiliating or defamatory content.

(2) Any employee / Councillor who feels that they have been harassed or bullied, or aggrieved by material posted or uploaded by a colleague on a Social Media website, should inform the Clerk, who will contact Powys Council's Monitoring Officer.

(3) Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal, private or confidential information. If you are unsure as to whether the information you wish to share falls into one of these categories, you should discuss this with the Clerk.

(4) Do not load, post or forward any content owned by a third party unless you have the consent of the third Party concerned.

(5) Before you include a link to a third party website, check that the terms and conditions of that website allow you to make a link to it.

(6) When using any Social Media platform, you must read and comply with the conditions of use.

(7) Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contributions may have on people's perceptions of the Council.

(8) You are personally responsible for content that you publish on Social Media applications.

(9) Do not intensify heated negotiations, try to be conciliatory, respectful and refer to facts.

(10) Do not discuss colleagues without prior consent.

(11) You should always consider the privacy of others and don't discuss potentially inflammatory issues e.g. politics and religion. Remember that although it is acceptable to make political points or canvass for votes through your own Social Media accounts, this will not be acceptable if you are offering an opinion on behalf of the Council.

(12) Please do not publish your contact details if people you do not intend to see are able to access them and make extensive use of them, and never publish contact details for anyone else.

(13) Do not make false or misleading statements.

(14) Be aware of the information that is posted on sites and ensure that personal views are not published as the Council's.

(15) Request the permission to publish original photographs or videos by the people or organisations in the video or photograph before uploading them. You must ensure that permission of the parent / guardian is obtained before using photos of the children.

## **(VII) The Council's Website**

The Clerk or a member of staff to whom they have delegated authority will update the council's website with the following matters:

- Agendas and minutes of meetings
- Advertising events and activities
- Posting good news stories
- Link to appropriate websites or a press page, if those sites meet the Council's expectations of conduct as long as the terms and conditions of that website permit
- Advertise Vacancies
- ' Sharing ' of information from partners.
- Post or share information of promotional bodies for the benefit of the community such as schools, scouts, sports clubs and community groups
- Facebook etc can be used to support the website.

## **(VIII) Monitoring**

(1) Employees and Councillors should be aware that any use of Social Media websites (whether or not they are used for council purposes) may be monitored and, where there are examples of breaches of this policy, action can be taken against employees under our Disciplinary Procedure and against Councillors under the Code of Conduct.

(2) In some circumstances, misuse of Social Media websites can be a criminal offence.

(3) In particular, a serious case of uploading, mailing, forwarding or mailing a link to any of the following types of material on a Social Media web site, whether professional or personal, will probably constitute serious misconduct / breaches of the Code of conduct (this list is not exhaustive):

- a) pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a conspicuous sexual or sexual nature);
- b) A false or defamatory statement of any person or organisation.
- c) Material that is offensive, disgusting, criminal, discriminatory, humiliating or potentially embarrassing for the Council, our councillors or our employees;

- d) Confidential information about the council or anyone else;
- e) Any other statement likely to create any responsibility (whether criminal or civil, whether you or the institution); Or
- f) material that infringes copyright or other intellectual property rights, or that disturbs the privacy of any person.

Any such action is addressed under the Disciplinary Procedure for officers / Code of conduct for Councillors.

(4) Where evidence of misuse is discovered the Council may conduct a more detailed investigation which would include examination and disclosure of monitoring records to the person nominated to carry out the investigation, and any witnesses or managers involved in the investigation. If necessary, such information may be given to the Police as part of a criminal investigation.

(5) If you notice that any use of Social Media by other employees / Councillors is in breach of this policy you should inform the Clerk, who will contact Powys Council's Monitoring Officer.

### **(IX) Responsibility for Content**

A major difference between Social Media and media and other platforms is that the keeper of any "site" is responsible not only for their own statements but also for statements from others that are made on those sites. Therefore, if an inappropriate statement is made, the owner of the "site" is responsible for withdrawing that statement.

### **(X) Policy monitoring and review**

The Council will be responsible for reviewing this policy on an annual basis to ensure that it meets social requirements and reflects best practice.

Further information for Councillors, published by the Welsh Local Government Association, on the use of Social Media can be found on the One Voice Wales website:-  
[http://www.onevoicewales.org.uk/OVWWWeb/good\\_practicegeneral-8204.aspx](http://www.onevoicewales.org.uk/OVWWWeb/good_practicegeneral-8204.aspx)

Adopted by Council – October 31<sup>st</sup> 2022.

For review annually at AGM.