



## LOOE TOWN COUNCIL

### USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

#### Introduction

The Town Council recognises the increasing use of Social Media such as Facebook, Twitter and Blogs etc., and the advantages gained in the use of such media to engage with the general public and share news of common interest. The Town Council also recognises that the use of such media can be abused with a resultant negative impact. This policy sets out the Town Council's practices to be adopted in the use of Facebook, Twitter and other social media accounts.

#### Policy Statement

The Looe Town Council's usage of Facebook, Twitter and other social media is intended to:

*Provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within East and West Looe and promote positive thoughts and comments from residents within the Town.*

Aspects of the Members' Code of Conduct apply to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. Online content should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate. What is written on the web is permanent.

In the main, Councillors have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failures to comply with the law may have more serious consequences. There are some additional duties around using websites for electoral campaigning and extra care needs to be taken when writing on planning matters where Councillors should avoid publishing anything that might suggest they do not have an open mind about a matter they may be involved in determining.

Individual Town Councillors are responsible for what they post. Councillors are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published email address that is used for Council business. Councillors are strongly advised to have separate Council and personal email addresses.

The Town Clerk and Amenities Manager will be responsible for posting and monitoring of the content ensuring it complies with the Social Media Policy.

The Policy will be reviewed annually.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Looe Town Council page are productive, respectful, energised and consistent with the Council's mission and goals, the following measures are to be adopted:

- Council members or staff must not use the Town Council's Facebook, Twitter or other social media platforms to promote personal or political agenda's. In particular, Council members must not use the Town Council's social media platforms for electioneering or campaigning during any pre-election (Purdah) period.
- The Facebook page or Twitter account should not be used for commercial purposes or to market products or services.
- Differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including Looe Town Council members or staff, will not be permitted.

- Be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarity, swearing, threats or abusive of language will not be tolerated.
- Freely share news about Looe and the Town Council's activity in delivering services to the community.
- When posting existing material, photographs or news items, be aware of copyright laws. Be accurate and give credit where credit is due.
- Stay on topic.

The Facebook page and Twitter account will not be monitored 24/7 and the Town Council will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received but will endeavour to respond in a timely manner. The Town Council will however, endeavour to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant personnel as soon as practicably possible.

Sending a message/post via Facebook or Twitter will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and the Town Council will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through Facebook, Twitter or other social media channels, but will endeavour to do so. The Town Council's contact details for formal communications may be found on the Council's website: [www.looetowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.looetowncouncil.gov.uk)

Personal or other private information should not be included in Facebook or Twitter posts and messages to the Town Council.

The Town Council retains the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- Language that may be deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age or religion or belief should not be published on any social media site.
- Personal attacks, bullying, insults, or threatening language
- Potentially libellous or obscene remarks, information or statements that are of a personal, inflammatory, libelous or defamatory nature.
- Plagiarized material or any material deemed to be in violation of any laws, including copyright
- Private or personal information published without consent
- Information or links unrelated to the content of the forum
- Commercial promotions or spam
- Fake accounts or accounts that are impersonating others.

The Town Council, at its discretion, reserves the right to block users and will do so for unseemly usage of social media and disregard of, or non-compliance with this policy.

**Approved by Finance & General Purposes Committee: 8 September 2015**