

LOOE TOWN COUNCIL

KONSEL TRE LOGH

Social Media and IT Policy



Re-Adopted by Council:
15th May 2023

Next Review due: 31st May 2024

Looe Town Council

Social Media and IT Policy



1. Purpose of this policy

- 1.1 This policy is intended to help councillors and council staff, make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as; emails, blogs, wikis, social networking websites, podcasts, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Tik Tok and other relevant social media websites.

The policy relates to Councillors and Staff whilst acting for/on behalf of the Council and /or in their official capacity.

The council will encourage the use of social media for the purposes of:

- providing and exchanging information about services supporting local democracy
- advertise elections and co options
- gathering citizen insights and managing citizen relationships promoting cultural events or tourism for the area
- to support community cohesion, neighbourliness and resilience
- to post minutes and dates of meetings
- promoting local events and activities
- surveying or asking opinion
- sharing good news stories
- job vacancies and opportunities for learning
- communicating information from partners i.e. Police, East Looe Town Trust, Looe Harbour Commissioners, Library and Health etc.
- post and communicate information from other Parish related community organisations i.e. groups/clubs/associations/bodies e.g. Schools, sports clubs and community groups
- promoting best practice
- Post news stories
- Link to appropriate websites or press page if those sites meet the council's expectations
- of conduct
- Announce new information appropriate to the council
- Post other items as the council see fit
- promoting business forums*

* The Council should avoid giving the impression it is endorsing an individual business, all businesses should be treated equally. The exception for this rule is the Tourism Destination Website and social media.

- 1.2 This policy outlines the standards the council requires councillors and staff to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which the council will monitor the use of social media and the action to be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.
- 1.3 This policy supplements and should be read in conjunction with all other policies and procedures adopted by the council, such as the Equal Opportunities Policy, Data Protection Policy, Disciplinary Procedure, Members Code of Conduct and such like.
- 1.4 This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

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2. Who is covered by this policy?

- 2.1 This policy covers all individuals working at all levels with the council, including all elected and co-opted councillors, the clerk to the council and all other employees and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

3. The scope of this policy

- 3.1 The council has a corporate presence on the web and by use of email, which it uses to communicate with people who live in, work in and visit the parish. The council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. We may ask those who contact us for their preferred channel of communication when we deal with them. Over time the Town Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur this Social Media Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.
- 3.2 All members and staff are always expected to comply with this policy to protect the reputation, privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the council, its services, employees, partners and community.
- 3.3 Serious breaches of this policy by employees may be dealt with under the Employee Disciplinary Procedure. The council may take disciplinary action in respect of unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive comments by an employee.
- 3.4 Breach of the policy by volunteers will result in the council no longer using their services and, if necessary, appropriate action will be taken.
- 3.5 Behaviour required by the Members' Code of Conduct shall apply to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. Members will bear in mind that inappropriate conduct can still attract adverse publicity, even where the code does not apply. Remarks are easily withdrawn, apologised for and forgotten when made in person, but posting them on the internet means that they have been published in a way that cannot be contained. Online content should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate. Members must be aware that their profile as a councillor means the more likely it is they will be seen as acting in an official capacity when blogging or networking. It must be remembered that communications on the internet are permanent and public. When communicating in a 'private' group it should be ensured that the council would be content with the statement should it be made public.
- All posts including private posts are subject to Freedom of Information requests as are chat bar conversations and recordings of meetings.**

4. Rules for using website and social media.

- 4.1 Staff and councillors must not allow their interaction on any Council run websites / blogs to damage their working relationships with others. They must not make any derogatory, discriminatory, defamatory or offensive comments through these site, about other staff, councillors, the council or about the people, businesses and agencies the council works with and serves.

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- 4.2 Posts must not to contain anyone’s personal information, other than necessary basic contact details.
- 4.3 If staff or Councillors blog or tweet personally, and not in their role as a Councillor, they must not act, claim to act, or give the impression that they are acting as a representative of the Council. They should not include web links to official council websites as this may give or reinforce the impression that they are representing the council.
- 4.4 All staff and Councillors must ensure they use council facilities appropriately. If using a council-provided website, blog site or social networking area, any posts made will be viewed as made in an official capacity. Do not use council facilities for personal or political blogs.
- 4.5 The Council will appoint a nominated person(s) as “Moderator”. They will have overall responsibility for posting and monitoring of the content on council pages, ensuring it complies with the Social Media Policy. The “Moderator” will have authority to immediately, without notice or comment, remove any posts from the council’s social media pages if they are deemed to be inflammatory or of a defamatory or libellous nature. Such post will also be reported to the Hosts (i.e. Facebook) and to the clerk for council records.
- 4.6 The Council will appoint a nominated “Webmaster” to oversee the Town Council Website and a “Moderator” for social media posts. Both will be able to post on all channels. Individual officers and members can be authorised as below* to suggest content and edit. The moderator will have overall oversight of all postings and authorise other officers to create posts.

*Admins will control all aspects of the social media pages, they can delete posts, create posts, create adverts, assign page roles and view insights.

*Editors can amend a page, send messages, delete posts and view insights only.

*Councillors should not create new posts directly but can comment taking into account others aspects of this social media policy.

Authorised access Looe Town Council website and social media

	Webmaster/Moderator	Admin	Editors/Reviewers
Looe Town Council Website Social media channels Including Future Looe	Commercial Strategy Manager and/or Communications and Events Officer	Town Clerk Library Supervisor Communication and Events Officer	To be determined on business need – may include Councillors Information Officers Admin Officer Volunteers

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	Webmaster/Moderator	Admin	Editors/Reviewer
Looe Tourism Destination website and social media channels	Commercial Strategy Manager	Library Supervisor Communications and Event Officer Business Development Officer	Tourism Destination Website Development Officer Library & Tourism Assistant x 3

	Moderator	Admin	Editors/Reviewers
Looe Library and Community Hub social media channels	Commercial Strategy Manager	Library Supervisor Communications and Events Officer	Library & Tourism Assistant x 3

- 4.7 Staff and individual town councillors are responsible for what they post. They are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published e-mail address, which is used for council business. Both staff and councillors are strongly advised to have separate council and personal email addresses.
- 4.8 All social media sites in use should be checked on a regular basis to ensure the security settings are in place.
- 4.9 When participating in online communication staff and councillors must:
- Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent
 - Never make false or misleading statements
 - Not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment
 - Protect the good reputation of the council
 - Be mindful of the information posted on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the council
 - Keep the tone of comments respectful and informative, never condescending or “loud”
 - Use sentence case format, not capital letters
 - Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks. 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
 - Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications
 - Not post comments that they would not be prepared make in writing or face to face
 - Never name an individual third party unless they have written permission to do so
 - Seek permission to publish original photographs or videos from the persons or organisations in video’s or photographs before they are uploaded (and must check that there is parental permission before photos of children are used)
 - Respect the privacy of other councillors, staff and residents
 - Never post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations, such as libel and copyright including plagiarised material
 - Fact check all posts

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The Town Council reserves the right to;

- Remove posts that violate above this policy.
- Block people who do not adhere to this policy.

See Appendix 1 **Do's and Don'ts of using social media guidance**

5. Responding to Social Media Communication

- 5.1 Residents and councillors should be aware that not all communication through social media requires a response, although an acknowledgement should be made if appropriate.
- 5.2 If a matter raised in any form of social media needs further consideration by the council it may be raised at either the open forum or as a full agenda item for consideration by a quorum of Councillors. Again the 'poster' shall be informed via the page or direct message that this is the case and invited to contact the Clerk or a senior manager direct. Any response agreed by the council will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- 5.3 Reports of any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should be reported to the Clerk, or senior manager for referral to the 'Webmaster' and "Moderator(s)" and/or council as required.
- 5.4 The Policy will be reviewed annually.
- 5.5 All staff and Councillors will receive annual social media training and new councillors on induction.

6. Acceptable use of Computers and Internet usage

- 6.1 The council's computer systems are important to its operation. The council wish to protect its staff and volunteers from the possible consequences of misuse. Staff using the computers and/or the internet link must not be used for browsing certain sites or downloading files from these sites. If the policy is not adhered to, actions will be taken through the Disciplinary procedures.
- 6.2 For the avoidance of doubt, this policy applies to volunteers as well as staff and this includes councillors who make use of the councils' computers or internet connection.
- 6.3 The council's computers are for work use only. In order to protect work laptops and computers from risks of data exchange there must be no exchange of hard data or programmes between councils computers and employees / volunteers/ councillors own computers without prior written approval from the Strategic Commercial Director or in the case of the Commercial Strategic Director, from the Mayor or Deputy Mayor of the council.

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Flow diagram - Authorisation, actioning and monitoring of website & social media posts

