



## **Abergavenny Town Council SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 A revolution is taking place in communications. The world is experiencing the biggest ever change in how information is created and owned, as well as the speed in which it can be shared. This is changing the way we live, work and even how we speak and think.
- 1.2 'Social media' is a blanket term applied to a range of online multimedia tools that are used for creating content and two-way communication. They can be accessed via your smartphone, PC, laptop, tablet or smart TV. All social media accounts are free of charge and can be set up quickly and easily from an Internet page.

### **2. Policy statement**

- 2.1 This policy is intended to help employees and councillors make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as social networking websites, forums, message boards, blogs or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.
- 2.2 This policy outlines the standards the council requires employees and councillors to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which their use of social media will be monitored and the action that will be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.

### **3. The scope of the policy**

- 3.1 All employees and councillors are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the council.
- 3.2 Breach of this policy by employees may be dealt with under the council's Disciplinary Procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.

3.3 Breach of this policy by councillors will be dealt with under the Code of Conduct.

#### **4. Responsibility for implementation of the policy**

4.1 The council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.

4.2 The Town Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to the council's work.

4.3 All employees and councillors 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 or the Mayor.

4.4 Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Town Clerk.

#### **5. Using social media sites in the name of the council**

5.1 All staff and councillors are permitted to 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.

5.2 If staff and councillors are not sure if the comments are appropriate do not post them until the comments have been checked with the Town Clerk.

#### **6. Using social media**

6.1 The council recognises the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about the council and the support and services it provides to the community. It also recognises the importance of our employees and councillors joining in and helping shape community conversation and direction through interaction in social media.

6.2 Before using social media on any matter which might affect the interests of the council, councillor and employees must have read and understood this policy and employees must have gained prior written approval to do so from the Town Clerk.

#### **7. Rules for use of social media**

7.1 Whenever using social media in accordance with this policy, there must be adherence to the following general rules:

- Do not upload, post or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content. Any employee/councillor who feel that 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/Mayor.
- Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal private or confidential information. If unsure whether the information to be shared falls within one of these categories, this should discuss this with the Town Clerk/Mayor.
- Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless consent has been given. Before including a link to a third party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit this.
- When making use of any social media platform, read and comply with its terms of use.
- Be honest and open but be mindful of the impact that the contribution might make to people's perceptions of the council.
- Councillors and employees are personally responsible for content published into social media tools.
- Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.
- Don't discuss colleagues without their prior approval.
- Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion. Remember that although it is acceptable to make political points or canvass votes via personal social media accounts this will not be permissible if commenting on behalf of the council.
- Avoid publishing personal contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people and never publish anyone else's contact details.
- The [WLGA guidance](#) on use of social media is a very informative document offering a general overview and guidance on the do's and don'ts in relation to using social media

## **8. Monitoring use of social media websites**

- 8.1 Employees and councillors 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 and councillors under the Code of Conduct.
- 8.2 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. In particular a serious case of uploading, posting forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will probably amount to gross misconduct/breach of the Code of Conduct (this list is not exhaustive):
- 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, our councillors or our 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, whether for the individual or the organisation); 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/Code of Conduct.

- 8.3 Where evidence of misuse is found, the council may undertake a more detailed investigation in conjunction with MCC Monitoring Officer. This may involve the examination and disclosure of evidence to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or managers involved in the investigation as appropriate. If necessary such information may be passed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.
- 8.4 If any use of social media by other employees/elected members is observed in breach of this policy it must be reported it to the Town Clerk or Mayor.

## **9. Monitoring and review of this policy**

- 9.1 The council shall be responsible for reviewing this policy annually to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

Review date 12 May 2022