



# NEWTOWN AND LLANLLWCHAIARN TOWN COUNCIL

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

### 1. Introduction

**1.1** A revolution is taking place in how we communicate. 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.

**1.3** This policy, therefore, links to other policies within the Council including policies relating to:

- Communications Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Engagement Policy
- Whistle Blower Policy.

### 2. Policy statement

**2.1** This policy is intended to help employees, volunteers and Members 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, volunteers and Members to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which their use of social media will be regulated, and the action that will be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.

### 3. The scope of the policy

**3.1** 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.

**3.2** Breach of this policy by employees and volunteers may be dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.

**3.3** Breach of this policy by elected Members may be dealt with under the Code of Conduct, and may be referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

#### **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 (or delegated staff) is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to the Council and its work.

**4.3** 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 who will inform the Mayor as Chair of Council. A breach by the Town Clerk should be reported to the Mayor as Chair of Council directly.

**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** The Town Clerk, as Proper Officer of the Council, (or delegated staff) are permitted to post material on a social media website in the name of the Council.

**5.2** Volunteers may post in the name of the Council only by agreement with the Town Clerk (or delegated staff).

**5.3** Members may post in the name of the Council only by agreement with the Town Clerk (or delegated staff).

**5.4** If employees, volunteers or Members are not sure if their comments are appropriate, they should refrain from posting until they have checked with the Town Clerk (or delegated staff).

#### **6. Using social media as a means of communications and engagement**

**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, volunteers and Members joining in and helping shape community conversation and direction through interaction in social media.

- a) Before using social media on any matter which might affect the interests, reputation or risk of the Council users must have read and understood this policy and
- b) Employees or volunteers must have gained prior written approval to do so from the Town Clerk.

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

Whenever permitted to use social media in accordance with this policy, users

must adhere to the following general rules:

- 7.1** Do not upload, post or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.
- 7.2** Any employee, volunteer or Member 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 who will inform the Mayor as Chair of the Council. A breach by the Town Clerk should be reported to the Mayor as Chair of Council directly.
- 7.3** Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal private or confidential information. If users are unsure whether the information they wish to share falls within one of these categories, they should discuss this with the Town Clerk/Mayor.
- 7.4** Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.
- 7.5** Before including a link to a third-party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit a to link to it.
- 7.6** When making use of any social media platform, users must read and comply with its terms of use.
- 7.7** Be honest and open but be mindful of the impact the contribution might make to people's perceptions of the Council.
- 7.8** Users are personally responsible for content they publish into social media tools.
- 7.9** Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.
- 7.10** Don't discuss colleagues without their prior approval.
- 7.11** 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 private social media accounts this will not be permissible if commenting on behalf of the Council. Comments on behalf of Council should be kept factual or remain within the boundaries of decisions and/or policies of Council.
- 7.12** Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact or personal details.

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

**8.1** Employees, volunteers and Members 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 or volunteers under the 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.

**8.3** 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 (including 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 damage to the interests, reputation or risk of 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 you 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 Policy/Code of Conduct.

**8.4** Where evidence of misuse is found the Council may undertake a more detailed investigation involving the 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.

**8.5** If employees, volunteers, or Members notice any use of social media by other employees, volunteers or Members in potential breach of this policy they should report it to the Town Clerk who will report it to the Mayor as Chair of Council. If a breach is by the Town Clerk, they should report directly to the Mayor.

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

9.1 The Council shall be responsible for reviewing this policy every three years to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

This Council adopted this Policy for Social Media at its Council meeting on

.....24/06/19.....

Review Date = 3-years

Amended or Reviewed	Date	Version No	Who
Approved	11/7/17	110717/1	Sue Newham
Draft amendments	24/06/19	240619/2	Town Clerk
Approved	24/06/19	240619/2	Council (Mayor D Selby)