



Serving Durrington and Larkhill

**DURRINGTON TOWN COUNCIL**  
**SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

### Social Media Policy

POLICY REVIEW	
signed	(Having been approved)
Minute reference	130/21 a
Date ratified	FEBRUARY 2022
Date of next review	FEBRUARY 2025

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 The widespread availability and use of social networking applications bring opportunities to understand engage and communicate with the public in new ways. It is important that the Town Council is able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly. However, it is also important to ensure that the Council balance this with its responsibilities to the electorate; its legal responsibilities and its reputation. The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice. The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- a. that Durrington Town Council is not exposed to legal and governance risks;

- b. that the reputation of the Council is not adversely affected;
- c. that our users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the Council as agreed.

## **2. Scope**

2.1 This policy covers the use of social networking applications by Council employees, Elected Members, Co-opted Members and by partners or other third parties (including contractors and volunteers) acting on behalf of the Council. These groups are referred to collectively as 'Council representatives' for brevity. The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking applications which are used for any Council-related purpose and regardless of whether the applications are hosted corporately or not. They must also be considered where Council representatives are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications provided by external organisations. Where an individual's personal account refers to their role as a council representative the guidelines within this policy may also apply.

## **3. What is social media?**

3.1 Social networking applications include, but are not limited to:

- Blogs
- Online discussion forums
- Collaborative spaces
- Media sharing services, for example YouTube
- 'Micro-blogging' applications, for example Twitter.

3.2 Many of the principles of this policy also apply to other types of online presence such as virtual worlds and RSS aggregation services and the use of these services should also be discussed with the Clerk to the Council. All Council representatives should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and **UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018**. Use of social networking applications in work time for personal use only is not addressed by this policy. This policy is based on the Civil Service Code: Principles for Participation Online and advice produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations and other sources of good practice.

## **4. Enforcement**

4.1 Any breach of the terms set out below could result in the application or offending content being removed in accordance with the published complaints procedure and the publishing rights of the responsible Council representative being suspended. The Clerk reserves the right to require the closure of any applications or removal of content published by Council representatives which may adversely affect the reputation of the Council or put it at risk of legal action. This includes personal accounts within the scope defined in

paragraph 2.1. Any communications or content published that causes damage to the Council, any of its employees or any third party's reputation may amount to misconduct or gross misconduct to which the Council's Disciplinary Policy applies.

## **5. Policy**

5.1 All proposals for using social networking applications as part of a Council service (whether they are hosted by the Council or by a third party) must be approved by the Town Council.

5.2 Council representatives must adhere to the following Terms of Use. The Terms of Use at paragraph 6 apply to all uses of social networking applications by all Council representatives. This includes, but is not limited to, public-facing applications such as open discussion forums and internally facing uses such as project blogs regardless of whether they are hosted on corporate networks or not.

5.3 Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct. The Council expects that users of social networking applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration for the rights of others and strictly in accordance with these Terms of Use.

## **6. Terms of Use**

Social networking applications as defined in paragraph 2.

6.1 Must not be used to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claims for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the Council into disrepute.

6.2 Must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner.

6.3. Must not be used for actions that would put Council representatives in breach of Council Code of Conduct or policies relating to Elected Members, Co-opted members, or staff.

6.4 Must not breach the Town Council's Equality and Diversity Policy.

6.5. Official Council pages must not be used for party political purposes or specific campaigning purposes as the Council is not permitted to publish material which 'in whole or part appears to affect public support for a political party' (LGA 1986).

6.6. Official Council and Mayoral profiles and pages must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests or personal campaigns.

6.7. Official Council profiles and pages must not be used for the promotion of commercial ventures. Where individuals, including those from partner organisations and other volunteers, are involved and are acting on behalf of the Council, they will also be expected to comply with the relevant Council policies.

6.8. Where social networking applications are being managed by Council representatives, appropriate feedback and complaints information must be published in a prominent place which is easily accessible to other users.

6.9. The use of the Council's logo and other branding elements should be used where appropriate to indicate the Council's support. The logo should not be used on social networking applications which are unrelated to or are not representative of the Council's official position.

6.10. Council representatives should identify themselves as such where appropriate on social networking applications when speaking in an official capacity.

6.11. Council representatives should ensure that any contributions they make are professional and uphold the reputation of the Council. For locally sensitive or contractual issues advice should be sought from the Clerk before commenting.

6.12. All users need to be aware that applications may be closed for a defined period before local and national elections in order to comply with legislation which affects local authorities.

## **7. Review.**

7.1 This policy should be reviewed in conjunction with the election cycle or after any formal complaint as part of the lessons learned formal review process.