

# **CROMER TOWN COUNCIL**

## **Social Media Policy**

### **1. Policy Aims & Objectives**

This policy aims to provide clear standards of conduct when using social media, outline the standards to observe and outline the monitoring of use and the action that will be taken for any breaches of this policy.

### **2. Definitions**

The term “social media” is used to describe dynamic and socially-interactive, networked information and communication technologies by which personal information or opinions can be presented for public consumption on the internet.

Examples of social media applications are blogs, micro blogs e.g. Twitter, wikis, social networking sites e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, podcasts, forums, message boards, media sharing services such as YouTube and any other sites which invite or allow comments, such as newspapers and other online forums.

### **3. Scope**

This Policy applies to staff, permanent or temporary, and members of Cromer Town Council.

### **4. Procedure**

- It is recommended that a privacy risk assessment is undertaken and use of any social media tools are discussed with the New Media team before use commences.
- Staff must fully understand how sites work and what different settings or functions are available to use in order to reduce the risks associated with the use of social media.
- Appropriate privacy settings should be set up for staff social media accounts as well as for specific content shared with others.
- Staff must identify themselves as staff when contributing/commenting on any sites where their activity may be relevant to their institution.

- Staff must not mix work and personal use where any publication could bring the organisation into disrepute. Separate accounts, or use of available tools, should be used to ensure that staff professional presence on social media is clearly separate from their person/private social media activity.
- Staff must ensure any publication complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and must not breach confidentiality or the right to privacy under the Human Rights Act or similar duty to protect private information.
- Staff must not publish defamatory, illegal, sexual, discriminatory or offensive material.
- Staff must not publish material for any party political purposes or specific campaigning for a political party.
- Staff must not publish material for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns on sites where they are identified as staff.
- Staff must be professional and respectful at all times.
- Staff must only publish material in line with the council's staff code of conduct, equal opportunities, bullying and harassment policies.
- Staff must ensure any third party suppliers publishing material on behalf of the institution also adhere to these rules.
- Staff must not purport to represent the council's views or opinions or refer to any of the council's customers or service providers when using social media in a personal capacity.
- Staff must take responsibility for setting secure passwords in order to prevent accidental or malicious access to their social media accounts.
- It is important to bear in mind that individuals differ in their access to, and use of, social media. For important communications, social media should not be used as the sole method of communication.
- Wherever possible, staff should ensure that information and resources shared by social media are accessible to the widest possible number of people and/or can be provided in alternative formats (on request).

## **5. Monitoring of social media**

The use of social media while at work will be monitored in line with the institution's monitoring policy. Social media tools need to be monitored by CTC in order to minimise the risk of harm to staff or the council's reputation. When using services which the institution cannot control via moderation or user authentication (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) staff are responsible for closely monitoring comments, for deleting or reporting inappropriate posts and/or restricting membership of online groups.

## **6. Members**

Members should be aware of the Council's Code of Conduct and any legal implications if they are posting comments or views on social media about individual Members or Council employees or sharing information about the Council.

Social Media should not be used as a platform to discuss Council Policy and Members who wish to challenge the Council's procedures must refer their concerns to the Town Clerk in the first instance.

Members are not permitted to share the outcomes of closed working groups or fact finding sessions on social media.

Defamation is the act of making a statement about a person or a company that is considered to harm reputation. If the defamatory statement is written (in print or online) it is known as libel. Members should be aware of this and refrain from making defamatory comments.

## **7. Use of social media in the recruitment process**

Where necessary, information derived from social media can be taken into account as part of the recruitment process, for example, finding out more information about an applicant on LinkedIn. Information collected from social media must be in accordance with data protection principles, cannot be used for any other purpose and must not be used in a discriminatory way.

## **8. Non compliance**

Where evidence of misuse is found CTC may undertake an investigation in accordance with the disciplinary policy which may involve 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.

## **9. Complaints**

Any complaints received regarding the use of social media will be dealt with in accordance with the council's complaints procedure.

## **10. Organisational Responsibilities**

Staff are expected to refresh their knowledge of relevant CTC policies which apply in this context. Staff are responsible for ensuring they have read, understood and agreed to this policy before accessing and posting content via the council's social media accounts.

## **11. Equal Opportunities**

The use of social media has the potential for both positive and adverse impacts on equality and diversity, depending on how it is used. Staff need to be fully aware and vigilant in respect of comments on social media that could be offensive or discriminatory, or which could constitute bullying and/or harassment.

Different levels of use and access to social media by individuals with different characteristics means they will have different access to information shared by social media. For important communications, social media should not be used as the sole method of communication.

Content shared by social media may not be equally accessible to all (eg. use of video without subtitles may be inaccessible to individuals with a hearing impairment).

Wherever possible, staff should ensure that information and resources shared by social media are accessible to the widest possible number of people and/or can be provided in alternative formats (on request).

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