



CREWKERNE TOWN COUNCIL

Social Media Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The aim of this policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to Town Councillors, Council staff and others who engage with the Council using online communications, collectively referred to as social media.
- 1.2 The Council will ensure that training is provided for members and officers in connection with this policy.
- 1.3 Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet.
- 1.4 This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):
 - Crewkerne Town Council's website
 - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and other social networking sites
 - YouTube and other video clips and podcast sites
 - Blogs, discussion forums, message boards or comments on web-based articles
 - Email
- 1.5 The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The principles of this policy apply to Town Councillors and Council staff and also applies to others communicating with the Town Council.
- 2.2 Members are strongly advised to use only the official Crewkerne Town Council email address provided for Town Council business and correspondence. Any account used for Town Council business and correspondence will be subject to any request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Members are responsible for ensuring the security of devices, apps and packages used and all devices should be password protected.
- 2.3 The policy sits alongside relevant existing policies which need to be taken into consideration.
- 2.4 The current Code of Conduct applies to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. Online content should be objective, informative and accurate. Councillors should be aware that their public profile as an elected representative may mean that they are more likely to be perceived as acting in an official capacity when blogging or posting.
- 2.5 Individual Town Councillors and Council staff are responsible for what they post in a Council and personal capacity.
- 2.6 In the main, Councillors and Council staff have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failure to comply with the law may have more serious consequences.

3. Guidance for using social media

- 3.1 Social media may be used to:
 - Distribute agendas, post minutes and dates of meetings
 - Advertise events and activities
 - Promote good news stories with a linked website or press page
 - Advertise job vacancies
 - Retweet or share information from partner agencies such as Principal Authorities, Police, Library, Health etc.
 - Announce new information

- Post or share information from other Town Council related community groups such as schools, sports clubs, community groups and charities
 - Refer resident queries to the clerk and all other Councillors
 - Share any other information that is relevant to the community
 - Use community engagement tools such as polls, questionnaires and competitions
- 3.2 When using social media (including email) Town Councillors and Council staff must be mindful of the information they post in both a personal and Council capacity and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative.
- 3.3 Online content should be accurate, objective, balanced and informative.
- 3.4 Town Councillors and Council staff must not:
- Hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms
 - Present personal opinions as that of the Town Council
 - Present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to the Council
 - Post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the Town Council
 - Post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks
 - Engage in personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications
 - Use an individual's name unless given written permission to do so
 - Publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
 - Disclose any commercially sensitive, personal or confidential information
 - Post any information that infringes copyright of others
 - Post any information that may be deemed libel
 - Post online activity that constitutes bullying or harassment
 - Bring the Town Council into disrepute, including through content posted in a personal capacity
 - Post offensive language relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief
 - Conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence
- 3.5 Councillors' views posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the Council at a Council or committee meeting may constitute predisposition, predetermination or bias and may require the individual to declare an interest at Council meetings.

4. Monitoring use of social media

- 4.1 Anyone with concerns regarding any content placed on social media sites should report them to the Town Clerk.
- 4.2 Misuse of social media content can in certain circumstances constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal action against you or the Council.
- 4.3 The Town Clerk acts as the moderator of Town Council's social media output and is responsible for monitoring content to ensure it complies with the Social Media Policy.
- 4.4 The moderator will have authority to remove any posts made by third parties from Council social media pages which are deemed to be of a defamatory or libellous nature. Where appropriate, the moderator will have the authority to report any such posting to any other appropriate agency including the Police and Somerset County Council's Safeguarding Unit.
- 4.5 A response is not always necessary.
- 4.6 The moderator has the right to restrict individuals from commenting or ban them from the Council's social media platforms.
- 4.7 All Council social media accounts in use should be checked on a regular basis to ensure the security settings are in place.

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Council's Policy Review Schedule.

Date approved: 11th October 2021

Review Date: October 2024