

POLICY NO.	A.24
POLICY SUBJECT	Social Media
ADOPTION DATE	26 September 2013 (C.25/0913)
LAST REVIEW DATE	26 November 2020 (C.05/1120)

1. Scope

This Policy outlines what is expected of officers, elected members and contractors in relation to using social media in order to protect the reputation and legitimate interests of Council.

The aim of this Policy is to outline what Council considers appropriate and productive use of social media, to minimise miscommunication and prevent misuse of social media tools that will undermine Council's brand and reputation.

2. Key Principles

- I. Social media will be used as a communication tool, to facilitate a direct link with local community. Social media will not be the driver for building a communications strategy, but rather, a tool used to facilitate community engagement.
- II. Information disseminated through social media will be accurate, authorised and aligned with Council strategies, policies and decisions.
- III. Use of social media will always follow clear identification of objectives and the right tools to meet those objectives.
- IV. Private information will be protected and copyright, privacy and other applicable laws will be taken into account when interacting with social media.
- V. Record keeping of information disseminated or collected via social media will adhere to Local Government Authority requirements.
- VI. In developing and posting and responding to content, officers will uphold the values of Council by acting with honesty, integrity, courtesy and professionalism and will not be discriminatory, defamatory, harassing or encourage law breaking.
- VII. Officers and elected members are responsible for being familiar with this policy.

3. Objectives

With the CEO's approval, selective use of social media sites will be employed to:

- Enhance Councils reputation.
- Develop stronger relationships with community members.
- Provide an informal and accessible way for communication between community and Council.
- Promote selected services, events, policies and activities.
- Expand community engagement opportunities.
- Provide essential updates to the community during a crisis or emergency.
- Protect the organisation's reputation by monitoring social media activity that relates to Council.

- Respond or clarify an issue in detail.

4. Links to Other Council Policies

- Code of Conduct.
- Community Consultation.
- Complaints.
- Provision of Information.
- Email/internet.
- Records Management /Archiving.
- Emergency Management Plan.

These policies have been reviewed to ensure alignment with this Social Media Policy.

5. Corporate Use of Social Media

5.1 Delegated Site Moderators

Delegated site moderators will be trained and authorised to write and post /moderate incoming content and respond to positive and negative comments. Delegated site monitors will be nominated by the CEO and will be the only officers to post/upload content on the official social media site.

All other officers wishing to post content on official social media sites can forward their information and/or responses to the delegated site monitors. The site monitors will then seek CEO approval if required (see 5.2).

5.2 Content

i. Content-promotional

Officers developing promotional content for use on official social media site/s for the purpose of promoting activities, programs, community consultation and events should ensure that content is appropriate and forward to the nominated departmental site monitor to review and upload onto the official social media site/s.

ii. Content-policy/response

Officers developing content regarding policy or official responses to public comment for use on the official social media site/s should forward to the nominated departmental site monitor for review and approval by the CEO. Site monitors will ensure the information posted is accurate and not misleading in any way.

When developing and posting content, officers WILL:

- Uphold the values of Council by acting with honesty, integrity, courtesy and professionalism.
- Ensure that all relevant legislation has been complied with and that there is adherence to Council codes, policies and procedures.
- Avoid political bias.
- Act in a timely manner.
- Take steps to avoid real or potential conflicts of interest.

When developing or posting content, officers must NOT:

- Use abusive, profane or sexually explicit language.
- Undertake commercial solicitations or transactions.
- Use copyright or ownership protected materials without appropriate approvals.
- Be discriminatory, defamatory, or encourage law breaking.
- Compromise Council, officer or system safety.
- Engage in personal campaigns.

When developing content officers will consider:

- Protection of privacy and the confidentiality of Council, officer and ratepayer information.
- Preventing disclosure of corporate information outside that which is authorised or publically available.
- Protection of Council's intellectual property and copyright
- Terms of service for nominated social media sites.
- Level of response for issues raised by people outside the municipality.

5.3 Content Removal

The CEO reserves the right to remove content such as illegal or offensive material. Material that is reasonably critical of Council or Shire operations will not be deleted, but, appropriate responses will be developed by delegated site moderators and uploaded once responses have been approved by the CEO.

Delegated site moderators will always state why a post or content was removed regardless of who posted the content.

5.4 Monitoring/Moderating/Responding

As a minimum requirement, delegated site monitors will monitor social media content and exchanges at least daily (Monday to Friday) and establish whether:

- Comments need a reply or removal.
- Current content is factual, accurate and up-to-date.
- Posts are relevant.
- New information needs uploading.

Delegated site monitors will make use of digital monitoring tools whenever available as part of their evaluation of social media activities and report to Council.

Delegated site monitors will respond to constructive feedback, however will not respond to remarks of a derogatory nature. All feedback will be authorised by the CEO.

5.5 Access

Delegated site monitors must post comments from the administrative profiles set up for the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes. Those accounts are:

- Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes Facebook pages.
- Any other social media sites approved and implemented by the CEO.

5.6 Branding

The brand is the corporate identity of Council and can take many forms (name, sign, symbol, colour combination, slogan). A clear brand is an essential tool in online communications. The Shire logo will be attached to all corporate content.

5.7 Engagement

Social media tools may be used for community engagement as appropriate. When an officer requests to use social media for community engagement the officer will provide a project outline which briefly articulates the desired outcome of the consultation process, how the outcome will be achieved, the relevance of social media tools in the consultation process and how the process will be managed and evaluated.

5.8 Copyright

Material which is copyrighted (applications, audio, video, graphics, images, photographs, publications) will not be used unless prior written consent is obtained from the creator or copyright owner and the original author or source of the material is acknowledged. Delegated officers will be diligent in their consideration of brand, copyright, fair use and trademarks.

5.9 Website

Information provided on the Shire website can be replicated through official social media sites as determined by the CEO.

5.10 Review and Evaluation

Ongoing procedural evaluations will be undertaken regularly by the delegated site monitors to ensure any arising issues relating to daily activity or content are dealt with swiftly. Procedural evaluations will be attended by current delegated site monitors and CEO.

An annual review of this policy to assess its effectiveness will be undertaken. During this process consideration will be given to any arising issues not solved during ongoing operations and procedural evaluations.

5.11 Record Management

In developing content and using social media, officers will comply with the requirements of the *Archives Act 1983* with reference to the State Archivists Guidelines on digital record management. Consideration of recording keeping requirements will be made before each new planned use of social media.

5.12 Resourcing/Training

The CEO will ensure that social media activities are adequately resourced to allow for adequate content development, monitoring, interpreting and responding to volume and content of messages as required.

6. Misuse of Corporate Social Media

Officers, other than delegated site monitors should not comment directly on official Shire social media pages but may send comments to the relevant delegated site monitor after the content has been approved by CEO.

Officers wishing to upload content onto an official Shire social media site are required to adhere by this policy including content development and authorisation before forwarding information to authorised officers for up-loading.

Delegated site monitors must not post or respond to material that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, and/or sexist or infringes copyright.

Whilst commenting or posting content onto Council's official social media sites, delegated site monitors must not bring Council's integrity into disrepute, or harm the operations or reputation of the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes.

7. Legal Issues/Liabilities

7.1 Defamation/Offensive/Obscene

Social media can appear to blur private and public spheres but activities on social media websites should be considered public activities. Despite the availability of privacy functions on social media websites, the possibility exists for content to be shared beyond intended recipients. Additionally it should be noted that the terms and conditions of use for most social media sites state that all content becomes the property of the site on which it is posted.

Online content is essentially permanent and should NEVER be considered private. Use of offensive, obscene or defamatory content may breach a number of Federal and State Laws. For example:

- Defamation Act 2005
- Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995 – offences related to telecommunications for example Section 474.17 deals with using a carriage service to menace or harass or cause offence.

Officers and elected members must not post offensive, obscene or defamatory content onto any of Council's official social media sites.

7.2 Privacy/Confidentiality

In developing content to uploading onto an official Council social medial site, officers and elected members will be cognisant of requirements under the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004*, the *Privacy Act 1988* and the *Local Government Act 1993*.

Personal and sensitive information cannot be published without permission from the person to which that information belongs, this includes photographs or quotes.

Delegated site monitors and elected members will not disclose confidential Council information, including but not limited to matters relating to closed meetings of Council.

7.3 Security Risks

Officers and elected members will be cognisant of security risks to Council through all use of social media.

Officers and elected members will also give consideration to security risks in relation to content development and uploading, recognising that while one small fact alone might not form a security risk, however, jointly all posted information can form part of

a collective whole that can be used against the interests of Council and the operations of the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes.

8. Personal Use of Social Media by Officers

Officers and elected members must not use Shire email addresses for personal social media logins. Officers and elected members must not establish fictitious names or identities deliberately intended to deceive, mislead or lie on Shire social media sites.

8.1 In Work Time

Incidental personal use of social media during work time is permissible provided the use of equipment and consumption of space on network is kept to a minimum and does not compromise, pre-empt or impact adversely upon Council business. Such use should not interfere with productivity, effectiveness and legitimate work activities and the time spent on personal use must be kept to minimum. Excessive use will not be tolerated.

The CEO will provide notice to staff if monitoring of social media usage is to be introduced.

8.2 Making Comments About Council

When using personal social media sites, officers and elected members must not purport to represent Council. It is permissible to mention where you work provided the website is appropriate for people of all ages – e.g. not a gambling or adult website, but you must make it clear you don't speak on behalf of Council.

When commenting on personal social media sites officers and elected members can post public information about Council – if the information can be found on the Official Council website.

In using personal social media accounts for personal communication, officers must not:

- Damage the reputation of Council.
- Use Council's intellectual property or copyrighted materials.
- Disclose sensitive or confidential information.
- Post offensive or defamatory comments – particularly about Council, officers or elected members.

Consideration should be given to the following:

- Could what you are doing harm the reputation of Council?
- Are you disclosing Shire material that you are not authorised to disclose?
- Have you made it clear to others when your contribution is as a private individual, not an employee of the Shire?
- Are you willing to defend your post to your Executive Manager or CEO?
- Are you behaving with integrity, respect and accountability?

9. Breach of Policy-Penalties

Officers and elected members must comply fully with the policy at all times.

If you are not sure if an activity complies, speak to your Executive Manager or CEO.

Noncompliance is a serious matter and appropriate action will be taken.

Nothing in this policy should be interpreted as diminishing or attempting to diminish an employee's right to engage in lawful activities.

An elected member breaching this policy may be subject to a Code of Conduct complaint (as per *the Local Government Act 1993* and the *Local Government (General) Regulations 2005*).

Officers breaching this policy may be subject to disciplinary action as per the Code of Conduct Policy (Officers and Elected Members).

10. Dispute Resolution

Disputes will be managed in accordance with dispute resolution policy.

Appendices

1. Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms vary in their level of engagement from 1:1 (eg Email, Personal Messages, Chat) to 1:Many (Blogs, photo sharing), Many:Many (Forums) and Few:Few (gated – follow me services).

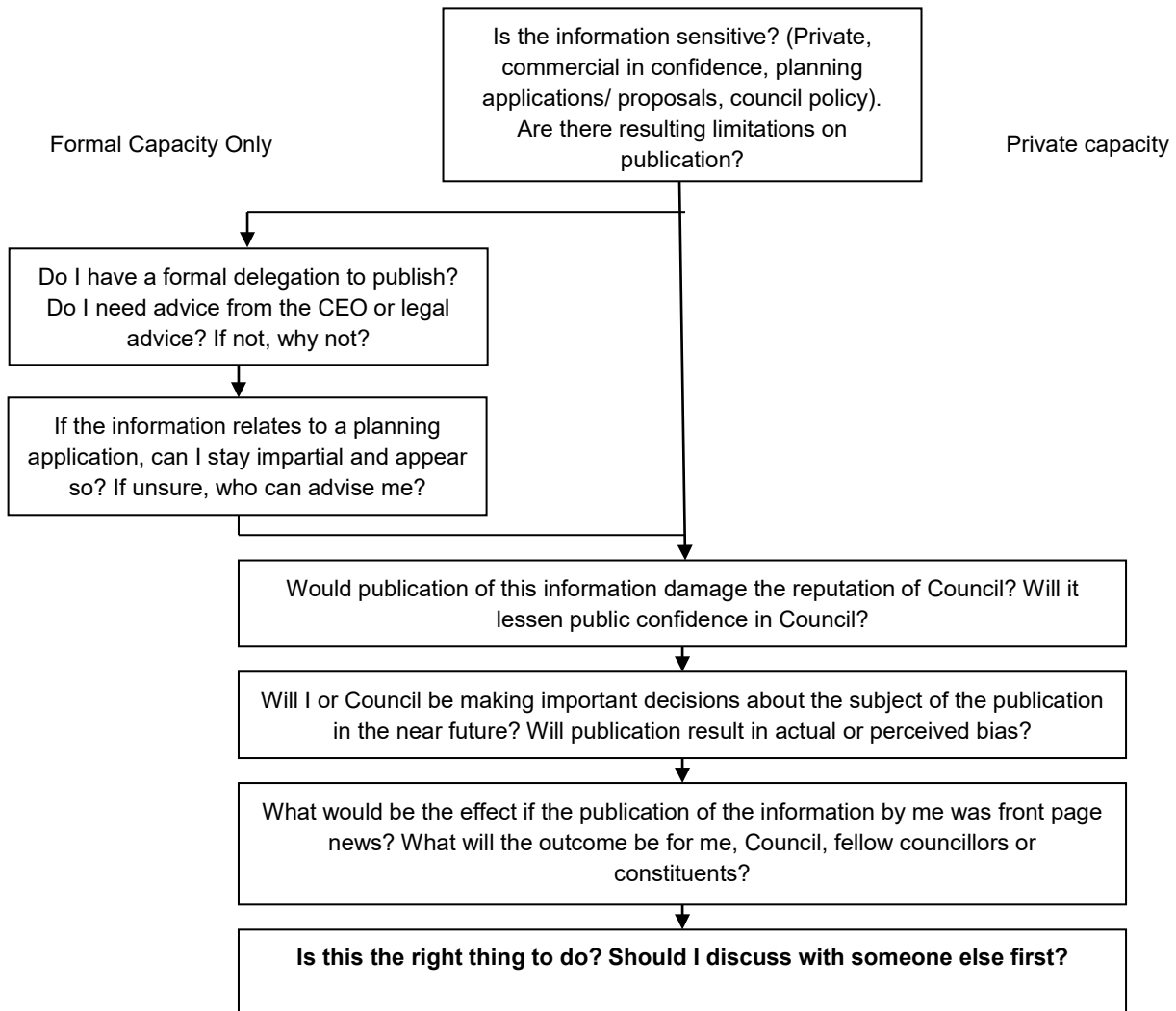
Wiki	Collaborative websites where users can create web pages and have others add, remove and maintain information on a topic or thread.
Social Networking Users can upload content that is used to connect, communicate and share with others, building online communities with shared interests.	Facebook Popular free site that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. ¹
	Twitter Social networking and micro blogging site enabling users to send and read short messages called Tweets.
	Linked In This site is geared towards companies and industry professionals looking to make new business contacts or keep in touch with previous co-workers, affiliates and clients. ²
	Yammer is an enterprise social networking and collaboration service for employees within a business organisation ³ . Only users with a specific email address connect to each other.
Internet Forums	A forum or message board is an online discussion site.
Blogs	Online journals of opinion captured in brief paragraphs that a constantly updated.
Photo sharing sites Allows users to upload images and is useful for categorising and organising pictures. Allows other users to comment on them or re-use with permission.	Pinterest A virtual pinboard which allows organisation and sharing of internet based information and photos.
	Flickr Online photo management and sharing application.
	Instagram A photo sharing and social network program with distinctive visual features.
Video sharing Sites	YouTube A video sharing website which allows users to upload, share and view videos.
Podcasting	Sites supporting the posting of audio files that can be downloaded and used by others.

¹ <http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/Facebook>

² <http://www.hudsonhorizons.com/Our-Company/Internet-Glossary/LinkedIn.htm>

³ <http://searchcio-midmarket.techtarget.com/definition/Yammer>

2. Questions for Consideration By Elected Members.



Howard A.E (2012), *Connecting with Communities: How Local Government is Using Social Media to Engage with Citizens*, ANZOG Institute for Governance at the University of Canberra and Australian Centre for Excellence in Local Government,