



**DARTMOUTH TOWN**  
**COUNCIL**  
**Social Media Guidelines**

**Adopted by Full Council 30<sup>th</sup> July 2013**

# Social Media Participation Guidelines

## 1. Introduction

The council is seeking to introduce the use of a Social Media termed as Facebook on an initial 3 month period commencing 1<sup>st</sup> August 2013.

For response to, and initiation of items from the Council during this initial period, it is suggested that specific matters, are referred to specific Chairmen or Vice Chairman of Committees (i.e. Planning/Strategy, Personnel, Corporate Property, General Purposes & Finance).

Matters concerning Civic affairs should be referred to the Mayor / Deputy.

Matters of Council Administration should be referred to the Clerk to the Council.

Any other matters outside an identifiable responsibility should be referred to the Mayor / Deputy.

At the end of 3 months a detailed analysis of usage will be made to the General Purposes Committee for their consideration.

## 2. Risks

As with any online activity there are some risks associated with using social media.

The following types of risk have been identified:

Damage to the reputation of the council – This could be through postings/photographs of staff, members or third parties pretending to represent the council.

Level of monitoring – The council can currently only monitor its social media sites during office hours.

Virus or other malicious software infection – This could include infection from social media sites into councils' IT systems or hacking of council's social media accounts.

Disclosure of confidential information or breach of data protection – Either deliberately or inadvertently through information/photos posted.

Breach of Safeguarding – Either regarding children, young people and vulnerable adults who may use social media.

## 3. Risk Management

It is proposed that the councils' social media sites are controlled and managed by the elected Chairmen / Vice Chairmen of specific Committees, the Mayor / Deputy Mayor and Clerk to the Council to be named as the Communications Team. This small group are to be fully aware of the risks and issues. To support this team a link will be established with SHDC Communications Team for support as necessary.

The council has anti-virus protection on PCs.

Where appropriate, the council will include a disclaimer on their social media sites which set out the parameters for use and control.

The council will remove libellous, offensive or defamatory posts at the earliest opportunity.

The councils' social media sites will be monitored on a daily basis and actioned by relevant Chairman/Mayor/ Staff as necessary.

Facebook has been restricted to block photographs from other users to reduce the risk of inappropriate content being posted.

Strong passwords must be used when creating social media sites for the councils and changed every three months.

Those using social media on behalf of the council are aware of the safeguarding issue relating to vulnerable groups and are familiar with the advice and guidance provide at [www.devonsafeguarding.org](http://www.devonsafeguarding.org)

#### **4. Principles of social media use**

- The councils' use of social media will comply with the laws of libel, copyright and data protection.
- Social media content is subject to the same rules of fairness, openness and transparency as the councils' uses in all their communications.
- Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of the councils' other policies.
- During times of major incident, emergency or crisis, social media should be employed as a key tool for keeping communities informed.
- All complaints made via social media should be added to the councils' complaints system.
- Social media use by the council should concentrate on facts. The councils' official social media sites will not be used for political gain or campaigning.
- The council will be aware of safeguarding issues regarding children and vulnerable adults when using social media.
- The council will be aware of potential problems like cyber-bullying and other online anti-social behaviour.
- When dealing with errors or controversial comments about them, the council will not remove criticism unless it contains swear words etc. Instead, responses will concentrate on correcting factual errors and responding to legitimate criticism.
- Derogatory or offensive comments will be removed from official council social media sites.
- Personal details like home addresses or personal phone numbers will not be given out on the councils' social media sites.
- Photos of people will only be used when all individuals pictured have given permission, in advance.

## **5. Using social media at work**

The council encourage employees to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites as part of their work. It is an important part of how the councils communicate with their residents. This is subject to the guidelines from SHDC councils' existing rules on the appropriate use of ICT equipment and systems. Employees may contribute to the councils' social media activities (in liaison with the Communications Team). Employees must be aware at all times that, while contributing to the councils' social media activities, they are representing the organisation. Staff using social media as part of their work must adhere to the following rules:

- Use the same safeguards as they would with any other form of communication about the organisation in the public sphere
- Obtain permission from the Mayor or Deputy before embarking on a public campaign using social media and work with the Communications Team to deliver it.
- Be aware of and adhere to the councils' guidelines for using social media
- Adhere to the staff code of conduct in their use of social media and be aware that breaches will result in disciplinary procedure

## **6. Using social media outside work**

If Staff use social media in their personal lives it must be separate from the councils' official sites. Employees are allowed to say that they work for the councils, but if they do so their personal social media profile should include a statement along the following lines: "The views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the council."

Staff should not engage in any social media activity which would bring the councils into disrepute.

Staff and Elected Members should not:

- breach the confidentiality of the councils or individuals related to the councils
- discuss the councils' internal workings
- breach the councils' copyright

Staff and Elected Members should:

- Adhere to the staff /members code of conduct in their use of social media and be aware that breaches will result in disciplinary procedure

## **7. Use by Members**

Members should be familiar with the councils' guidance on social media. They should ensure their use of social media does not put the councils' information and security systems at risk, or damage the reputation of the councils. It is recommended that Members also include a statement on their social media profiles along the lines of: "The views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the council."

At present any elected Members and staff will not be allowed the use of Twitter for any Council matter.