



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Social Media Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The overriding principle of this policy is to minimise the risks to our business through social media.
- 1.2 This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Wikipedia, Instagram and all other social networking sites, internet postings and blogs. It applies to use of social media for business purposes as well as personal use that may affect our business in any way.
- 1.3 This policy covers all employees, consultants, contractors, casual workers and agency workers.
- 1.4 Councillors – Misuse of social media will be dealt with through Code of Conduct.
- 1.5 This policy does not form any part of an employee’s contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

2. Implementation

- 2.1 The Corporate Services Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy, but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for its operation to the Town Clerk.
- 2.2 Managers have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that all employees understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements.
- 2.3 All employees are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media should be reported to the Town Clerk. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Town Clerk.

3. Compliance

- 3.1 Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any other Town Council policies. For example, you are prohibited from using social media to:
 - (a) breach the Town Council’s IT Policy;
 - (b) breach the Town Council’s Disciplinary Policy;
 - (c) harass or bully other staff in any way;
 - (d) unlawfully discriminate against other staff or third parties;
 - (e) breach the Town Council’s Data Protection Policy (for example, never disclose personal information about a colleague online);or
 - (f) breach any other laws or regulatory requirements.

- 3.2 Employees should never provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites, as such references, positive or negative, can be attributed to the organisation and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the organisation.
- 3.3 Employees who breach any of the above policies will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.
- 3.4 Only employees who have been trained in using social media are permitted to post content to the Council's own social media channels or post content to other people's social networks on behalf of the Council.

4. Personal Use of Social Media

- 4.1 Personal use of social media during working hours should be kept to a minimum and must not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content, does not interfere with your employment responsibilities or productivity and complies with this policy.
- 4.2 Employees are encouraged not to have current Councillors on their personal social networking accounts.

5. Prohibited Use

- 5.1 You must not make any social media communications that could damage our business interests or reputation, even indirectly.
- 5.2 You must not use social media to defame or disparage us, or employees or any third party; to harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against staff or third parties; to make false or misleading statements; or to impersonate colleagues or third parties.
- 5.3 You must not express opinions on the Town Council's behalf via social media, unless expressly authorised to do so.
- 5.4 You must not post comments about sensitive business-related topics, such as the Town Council's performance, confidential information and intellectual property. You must not include the Town Crest/logo in any social media posting or in your profile on any social media.
- 5.5 You are not permitted to add business contacts made during the course of your employment to personal social networking accounts.
- 5.6 Any misuse of social media should be reported to the Town Clerk.

6. Business Use of Social Media

- 6.1 If your duties require you to speak on behalf of the Town Council in a social media environment, you must still seek approval for such communication from the Town Clerk, who may require you to undergo training before you do so and impose certain requirements and restrictions with regard to your activities.
- 6.2 Likewise, if you are contacted for comments about the Town Council for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, direct the enquiry to the Town Clerk do not respond without written approval.
- 6.3 The use of social media for business purposes is subject to the remainder of this policy.

7. Guidelines for Responsible Use of Social Media

- 7.1 You should make it clear in social media postings, or in your personal profile, that you are speaking on your own behalf. Write in the first person and use a personal email address.
- 7.2 Be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that you are personally responsible for all communications which will be published on the internet for anyone to see.
- 7.3 If you disclose your affiliation with us on your profile or in any social media postings, you must state that your views do not represent those of your employer (unless you are authorised to speak on our behalf as set out in Paragraph 5.3). You should also ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with the professional image you present to clients and colleagues.
- 7.4 If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from posting it until you have discussed it with the Town Clerk.
- 7.5 If you see social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on us, you should contact the Town Clerk.

8. Monitoring

- 8.1 We reserve the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, staff activities using our IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, to ensure that our rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes and you consent to such monitoring by your use of such resources and systems.
- 8.2 For further information, please refer to the Town Council's IT Policy.

9. Recruitment

9.1 We do not permit the use of internet searches for recruitment purposes.

10. Breach of this policy

10.1 Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with our investigation, which may require handing over relevant passwords and login details.

10.2 You may be required to remove any social media content that we consider to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

11. Review

11.1 Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks lies with the Corporate Services Committee who will review this policy every 4 years (or as required).