

## **LLANDEILO TOWN COUNCIL**

### **SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLICATIONS POLICY**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

The Town Council utilises social media as a means of improving and enhancing communication with the community and external agencies. The social media platforms may include but are not limited to Facebook and Instagram. In addition, the Town Council produces a newsletter and may also occasionally submit copy to local newspapers.

The policy is intended to help employees and elected members make appropriate decisions about the use of Llandeilo Town Council social media. It outlines the standards that the Council requires employees and elected members to observe when using social media or any other form of publication. It clarifies the circumstances in which use of social media will be monitored and the action that will be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.

#### **2. SCOPE**

2.1 All employees and elected members are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the Council.

2.2 Breach of this policy by employees may be dealt with under our Grievance Procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.

2.3 Breach of this policy by elected members will be dealt with under the Code of Conduct.

2.4 All employees and elected members should ensure that they take the time to read and understand this policy. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the Clerk or Chair of the Council.

2.5 Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Clerk who will direct concerns to the Publication Group.

#### **3. POLICY GUIDELINES**

The social media platforms should not be used as a means for complaining by the Town Council about other organisations or individuals. The policy does not exist to gag councillors or prevent them expressing views. However, consideration must be given to any comments made which may be seen as politically sensitive, divisive or bringing the Town Council into disrepute. Any comments made must not be disrespectful or be seen as bullying. All comments made should focus on the issues and not individuals. In addition, councillors are asked to be mindful of:

- Personal privacy settings on their own social media pages.
- Comments made on personal social media pages.
- Considering adding a disclaimer to personal accounts that views expressed are their own, not that of the Town Council.

This policy will remain a working document and will be amended as required based on the experiences and activities which occur when administering the social media pages.

#### 4. USES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Posts should be of relevance and/or benefit to the people of Llandeilo, such as (but not limited to):

- 4.1 Posting information about and promoting forthcoming local events, e.g. festivals, music concerts, Christmas lights switch on etc.
- 4.2 Posting relevant information relating to the town, e.g. road closures, planning matters.
- 4.3 Facilitating debate and consultation, e.g. community matters, community meetings.
- 4.4 Signposting local residents and the wider public to relevant sources of information.
- 4.5 Informing the public of the purpose and remit of the Town Council and the scope of its powers.
- 4.6 Networking with other organisations and other Town and Community Councils.
- 4.7 Linking to the Town Council website to obtain further information on the Council's activities.
- 4.8 Positive images and reports of activities that benefit the town and residents.

#### 5. GENERAL RULES FOR USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- 5.1 When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.
- 5.2 Posts will appear bilingually wherever possible.
- 5.3 Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.
- 5.4 Before you include a link to a third-party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit you to link to it.
- 5.5 Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with the Clerk/Chair.
- 5.6 Do not upload, post or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.
- 5.7 Any employee/elected member who feels that they have been harassed or bullied or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform the Clerk/Chair.
- 5.8 Be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the Council.
- 5.9 Be careful of expressing opinions, rather than stating facts.
- 5.10 Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.
- 5.11 Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact details.

## 6. ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

A. The following guidelines are for the administration and management of the social media pages.

6.1 The social media pages will be administered, managed and monitored by two appointed councillors, in consultation with the Clerk. The appointment of the two named councillors will be reviewed each year. No other council member or employee is permitted to post material in the name of the Council or on its behalf without approval from the above.

6.2 The Publication Group will consider in detail the activity on the pages once a quarter and report findings to the Full Council.

6.3 Individuals who choose to comment on the pages, the general public and councillors will all be treated equally.

6.4 The social media pages are primarily used as means of sharing information. The Council will only respond to comments as deemed appropriate and social media will not be used to enter into any longer-term dialogue with any individual or group of individuals.

6.5 Any comments made on the pages which are perceived to be offensive and/or unacceptable will be read and the individual advised via a personal message.

6.6 If the same individual has three comments deleted for being in breach of the guidelines, the Administrators will block the individual from all social media pages. The individual will be notified of the action and advised of the appeal process.

6.7 There will be two criteria when determining permanent blocking of an individual from the social media pages:

- Criteria One – Immediate Block - Where a comment is deemed to be highly offensive, threatening or discriminatory or where an individual is pretending to be the Town Council.
- Criteria Two – Three strikes and out warning system - Where a comment is deemed to be disrespectful, intimidating or politically sensitive.

B. The following guidelines are for the administration and management of printed publications.

6.8 All copy in the name of the Town Council and intended for print will be sent to the Clerk or the Mayor for approval before submission.

6.9 Town Councillors intending, in their own name, to submit copy which references the Town Council should send a copy to the Clerk before print for comment and advice.

6.10 The Town Council newsletter will be accessible to the Clerk at all stages of development.

6.11 The Town Council newsletter will be submitted to the Clerk and Full Council for approval before print.

## 7. APPEAL PROCESS

In the event of an individual being blocked from the Town Council's social media pages they will be notified via a personal message of the reason for the decision. They will also be notified how to appeal against the decision. The individual will have a period of 28 days to appeal from the date of the original notification by the Administrator that they have been blocked from the site. The individual will be required to provide a written statement stating their argument for re-instatement to view and comment on the Town Council's social media pages. The Council Offices and Communications Sub-Committee will consider the individuals appeal at the next available meeting following receipt of the appeal and inform the individual of the outcome in writing within 28 days of the meeting.