

Sheringham Town Council

POLICY TITLE: Social Media Policy

REVISION DATE

REPLACES POLICY New POLICY

POLICY AIM:

To establish the principles of use of Social Media by Sheringham Town Council employees, councillors, representatives and volunteers. To provide guidance on the use of Social Media

POLICY STATEMENT What is Social Media?

‘Social media’ is the term commonly given to websites and online tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way = by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. This interaction may be through computers, mobile phones and tablet technology, but may extend in the future. Examples of social media include: Websites and Social networking – (e.g. Facebook) Professional networking (e.g. LinkedIn) Video sharing – (e.g. YouTube) Blogs (e.g. WordPress) Micro-blogging (e.g. Twitter) Message boards (e.g. BBC Messageboard) Wikis (e.g. Wikipedia)

Principles

- To publish information about the work of Sheringham Town Council to a wider audience.
- To avoid entering into online debates or arguments about the Council’s work.
- Social Media must NOT be used in the recruitment process for employees or new councillors - other than for the sole purpose of placing vacancy advertisements - as this could lead to potential discrimination and privacy actions, as well as breach of data protection issues.

Approved Council Social Media

- Sheringham Town Council Website
- Sheringham Town Council Facebook page
- (Twitter account) to be developed in the future

Users of Council Social Media

- In accordance with the Council's Standing Order No.21 the Town Clerk is the Council's nominated Press Officer with the authority to issue official press releases. No other member of staff (other than the Deputy Town Clerk when deputising for the Clerk under delegation) has the authority to issue public statements on behalf of the Council.
- All of the Council office staff will be trained in how to update and develop Sheringham Town Council Website. In addition, 2 councillors with a responsibility for the website will also be trained in its use in order to support staff where necessary.
- The website will be kept up to date by Sheringham Town Council office staff.
- The website will contain all the relevant and governance documents, which Sheringham Town council is legally obliged to share with residents. The Town Clerk is responsible for ensuring this is the case.
- Office staff will be responsible for updating the Facebook page (Twitter account once developed) under the direction of the Town Clerk.

1. Guidance for Council Officers on the use of Council Social Media

- Officers should be familiar with the terms of use on third party websites – e.g. Facebook - and adhere to these at all times
- No information should be published that is not already known to be in the public domain – i.e. available on the Council's website, contained in minutes of meetings, stated in Council publicised policies and procedures, or approved by the Town Clerk (or Deputy Town Clerk under delegation).
- Information that is published should be factual, fair, thorough and transparent.
- Everyone must be mindful that information published in this way may stay in the public domain indefinitely, without the opportunity for retrieval/deletion.
- Copyright laws must be respected.

- Conversations or reports that are meant to be private or internal must not be published without permission.
- Other organisations should not be referenced without their approval – when referencing, link back to the original source wherever possible.
- Do not publish anything that would be regarded in the workplace as unacceptable.
- Staff must remember that they will be seen as ambassadors for the Council, and should always act in a responsible and socially aware manner.
- Facebook pages are to be set up as to only allow the admins to post on the Sheringham Town Council Facebook Page
- Facebook comments are to be monitored to ensure they do not breach Sheringham Town Council's policies. Any comments that do are to be removed and the offending FB user to be blocked. Any staff member, councillor or volunteer who becomes aware of offensive comments on the STC Facebook page has a responsibility to inform the Town Clerk immediately.

2. Third party Social Media and Individual Councillor Usage

Councillors need to think about whether they are acting in a private capacity, or whether any impression might be conveyed that they are acting for and on behalf of Sheringham Town Council. The Council has adopted a Code of Conduct which is binding on all members. If you use Social Media in your official capacity as a councillor, you should always be mindful Sheringham Town Council Social Media Policy version 1 dated 6th March 2018, of the Code of Conduct, and of the seven Nolan principles applicable to holding public office – selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Do:

- Set appropriate privacy settings for any networking site
- Watch out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on any blog or page and remove them as soon as possible to avoid any perception that you condone such vies

- Be aware that the higher your profile as a councillor, the more likely it is that you may be seen as acting in an official capacity when you blog or network
- Ensure any Council facilities are used appropriately – if using a Council-provided site or social networking area, any posts that you make are extremely likely to be viewed as being made in your official capacity
- Avoid publishing any information that you could only have accessed in your position as a councillor
- Be careful if making ‘political’ points and avoid being specific or personal about individuals including other Councillors.

Don't:

- Comment in haste
- Post comments that you would not be prepared to make in writing or in face-to-face contact
- Use Council facilities for personal or political purposes

Never:

- Post comments that are in breach of the Council’s Equality and Diversity Policy or that incites violence or hatred.

IMPLEMENTATION

All Councillors and Staff have responsibility to ensure this policy is implemented and followed. Failure to do so may result in Disciplinary Action being taken against staff or Councillors being reported to the North Norfolk District Monitoring Officer under the code of conduct.

MONITORING

The policy will be monitored in the following ways:

MONITORING ACTIVITY PERSON RESPONSIBLE: All staff members with responsibility for Social Media plus 2 councillors with responsibility for Sheringham Town Council's Social Media

Any breach of the policy will be reported to the Town Clerk or Mayor, in the event of the breach being by the Town Clerk. Any breaches will be reported to the DPO (Data Protection Officer).

All reports will be investigated by the Town Clerk (or if complaint is about the Town Clerk then the Mayor)– consideration will be given as to what evidence has been provided and the seriousness of the allegation. The Town Council will be informed of the outcome of any investigation at the GP&D Committee. If the report could be considered criminal in nature, then the matter will be passed to the Police.

- Sheringham Town Council Mission Statement
- Equality Policy
- Councillor Code of Conduct 2018
- Standing Orders 2018
- Data Protection Policy 2018