



LUDGERSHALL TOWN COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR STAFF & COUNCILLORS

- 1. This policy provides guidance** to staff & Cllr's on the use of social media, both for business and personal purposes and sets clear expectations of their conduct. This is to ensure that staff & Cllr's are able to use social media effectively for both business and personal purposes without inadvertently placing themselves in a situation where the appropriateness of their conduct is called into question. Staff should refer to their contract of employment for specific guidance on how the council expects them to behave & Cllrs should refer to the councils Code of Conduct.

All staff & Cllrs must ensure that they are familiar with, comply with the contents of, and support the council's policies, procedures and guidance.

- 2. For the purposes of this policy**, social media is any type of online media that allows discussion and interaction as opposed to broadcast only. There are several types of social media we, as a council, use now or may use in the future and this policy covers all types, for example:

- Social networking (Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+).
- Microblogging (Twitter, Tumblr).
- Photo sharing (Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest).
- Video sharing (YouTube, Facebook Live, Periscope, Vimeo)

This policy also covers private messages sent over online channels such as direct messaging via Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp.

- 3. Generally, the use of LTC's social media** in a business context is to:
 - promote and publicise activities that will enhance the reputation of the council, the services it provides and commissions, and the wider community of organisations with which it works in partnership
 - respond to specific questions from the public, businesses and partners that are face based
 - clarify or correct any unclear or incorrect statements or views
 - provide information, advice and guidance (particularly in emergency situations)
 - Initiate and participate in dialogue with the public relating to council services
 - Promote the image of a human and approachable council
- 4. Personal use of social media** as the use and popularity of social media grows the line between what is public and private, personal, and professional can become blurred. It is important therefore that staff & Cllr's are aware that their personal digital activity could have an adverse impact on their professional role or the council's image and reputation. Even if you do not expressly name the council as your employer/or that you are a Cllr on social media, this policy will still apply if a connection with you can be reasonably made. You should refer to council policies for

guidance on what the council considers to be unacceptable in any public comment you make about services delivered or commissioned by the council, remembering the 7 'Nolan Principles' set out in LTC's Code of Conduct. Specifically, the council will not tolerate any of the following activity on social media if it can be connected to you as a Cllr or an employee of the council:

- abusive or threatening behaviour
- inappropriate comments or material that may be regarded as discriminatory
- false or misleading statements that could have a negative effect on the council's reputation
- inciting or supporting somebody to commit a crime or other unlawful acts

This could include content you share or like as this could suggest you approve of that content. You must consider carefully whether you accept 'friend requests' from service users, their families, friends or others e.g., contractors, elected members. Accept them only if you are quite sure this will not put you, as a council employee or Cllr, in the position of having a real or apparent conflict of interest.

5. When the Council is using social media, you should never publish anything on other facebook pages or publish anything that is confidential to the council or use social media to comment on potentially sensitive matters, including – but not restricted to – the following:

- information about service users
- information that is politically or commercially sensitive
- any information intended for internal use only (including matters concerning council services, organisational change or related proposals)

6. Whilst we are encouraging more social media engagement there is still a requirement for Staff not to use your personal social media during core work hours. Occasionally you may need to use your personal social media network for business purposes, and this is allowed if it is, to manage a service specific Facebook page as these must be administered from a personal Facebook profile.

7. Do not use personal social media to raise or discuss a complaint or grievance about the council, Cllrs or Staff. If you have a complaint, you should use the council's formal grievance procedures. If your post is 'politically restricted' these restrictions will also relate to social media.

8. Breach of policy

Please note that breach of this social media policy may lead to formal action under the council's Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedure or Code of Conduct.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years.

Approved at Finance & Policy February 2021

Ratified at FTC March 2021