



## ST ANNES ON THE SEA TOWN COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

### Introduction

The objective of this policy is to provide Councillors and staff with an overview of Social Media and outline the Council's position on various aspects of their use. In addition, it includes guidelines on Officer and Councillor responsibilities when using such channels of communication.

### Definition of Social Media

Social media is a term for websites based on user participation and user-generated content. They include social networking sites and other sites that are centred on user interaction. Social media has the following characteristics:

- Covers a wide variety of formats, including text, video, photographs, audio
- Allows messages to flow between many different types of device; PCs, phones and tablets (e.g. IPad)
- Involves different levels of engagement by participants who can create, comment or just view information
- Speeds and broadens the flow of information
- Provides one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communications
- Lets communication take place in real time or intermittently

Examples of popular social media tools include: Twitter, Facebook, You Tube, Pinterest, LinkedIn and Google Plus. Groupings of interest are a natural feature of the development of such systems with people with similar interests being attracted to share information.

### Purpose

The purpose of this document is to ensure:-

- that the Council is not exposed to any legal and governance risks;
- that the reputation of the Council is not adversely affected;
- that residents are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social media is legitimately representative of the Council.

### Scope

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by Council employees, Elected Members and by partners or other third parties (including contractors – *see under policy section*) on behalf of the Council. These groups are referred to collectively as 'Council representatives'.

The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking applications which are used for any Council-related purpose and regardless of whether the applications are hosted corporately or not. They must also be considered where Council representatives are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications provided by external organisations.

## **Policy**

1. When using social media you need to be aware that you are legally responsible for the content that you post, including under defamation, data protection and copyright laws.
2. You must not publically share information belonging to anyone else. When sharing photos or video content, please ensure that you have the agreement of all who appear within the content (or their parent or guardian if under 18).
3. All proposals for using social networking applications as part of a Council service (whether they are hosted by the Council or by a third party) must be approved by the Town Council first.
4. It must not be used for party political purposes or specific campaigning purposes as the Council is not permitted to public material which “in whole, or part, appears to affect public support for a political party” (LGA, 1986).
5. Must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns.
6. Must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner.
7. Must not breach any of the Council’s adopted policies or procedures.
8. Council representatives should ensure that any contributions they make are professional and uphold the reputation of the Council.

Where individuals from partner organisations are involved and are acting on behalf of the Council, they will also be expected to comply with the relevant Council policies.

## **Summary**

The Town Clerk reserves the right to require the closure of any applications or removal of content published by Council representatives which may adversely affect the reputation of the Council or put it at risk of legal action.

***Adopted by the Town Council on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2014***