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## **1. POLICY AIM**

1.1 To establish the principles of use of Social Media by Camborne Town Council Elected Members, Working Party Representatives and Volunteers and to provide guidance on the use of Social Media.

## **2. POLICY STATEMENT**

### 2.1 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.

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 social media websites include:

- Social networking – (e.g. Facebook)
- Professional networking (e.g. LinkedIn)
- Video sharing – (e.g. YouTube)
- Blogs (e.g. Wordpress)



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- Micro-blogging (e.g. Twitter)
- Message boards (e.g. BBC Messageboard)
- Wikis (e.g. Wikipedia)

### **3. LEGAL AND STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS**

3.1 The Town Council will abide by any relevant or applicable laws, terms, and conditions to ensure the organisation is not exposed to risks. This includes, but is not exclusively limited to, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

3.2 Town Council use of social media must be undertaken in accordance with the Town Council's policies and procedures.

3.3 Use of social media sites will at all times be consistent with the Town Council's duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults, in accordance with relevant statutory requirements.

3.4 Volunteers using social media sites for business purposes must maintain political neutrality and not indicate individual political opinions.

3.5 In the six-week run up to a local, general or European election – also known as the pre-election ("Purdah") period – the Town Council must not do or say anything that could be seen in any way to support any political party or candidate. The Town Council will continue to publish important service announcements using social media but may have to remove responses if they are deemed overtly party political.

### **4. PRINCIPLES**

4.1 To publish information about the work and activities of Camborne Town Council to a wider general audience.

4.2 To avoid entering into online debates or arguments about the Town Council's work. Social Media must NOT be used in the recruitment process for employees

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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.

## **5. USERS OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

5.1 In accordance with the Town Council's Protocol, the Town Clerk is the Council's nominated Press Officer with the authority to issue official press releases. No other member of staff has the authority to issue public statements on behalf of the Council without permission from the Town Clerk.

### **1. Guidance on the use of Council Social Media**

- Elected Members 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 Town Council publicised policies and procedures, or approved by the Town Clerk (or officer 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.
- All members & volunteers must remember that they will be seen as ambassadors for the Council and should always act in a responsible and socially aware manner.

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## **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 Camborne Town Council.
- The Town 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 of the Code and of the 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 you manage and remove them as soon as possible to avoid any perception that you condone such posts
- 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 Town Council facilities are used appropriate – if using a Town 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 incite violence or hatred.

CAMBORNE TOWN COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR  
MEMBERS, WORKING PARTY REPRESENTATIVES &  
VOLUNTERS

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**IMPLEMENTATION**

All Councillors and Staff have responsibility to ensure this policy is implemented and followed. Failure to do so could result in Councillors being reported to the Cornwall Council Monitoring Officer under the code of conduct.