



## Policy 44 – Social Media

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### OBJECTIVE

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The purpose of the Social Media Policy is to define Council objectives and obligations in relation to using all forms of Social Media

### POLICY

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See following page.



Dorset Council

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## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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## Acknowledgements

This Policy is based on the Model Social Media Policy produced by the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT).

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## Scope

This policy outlines what is expected of elected members and staff in relation to using social media in order to protect the reputation and legitimate interests of Council.

The aim of the policy is to build an understanding of what is appropriate and productive use of social media, to minimise miscommunication and prevent misuse of social media tools that will undermine Council's brand and values

In describing appropriate activity the Policy recognises that elected members and staff may use social media in a private capacity or a work capacity, either during work time or personal time, using Council property or personal property.

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## What is social media and why do we use it?

Simply put, social media is a collection of internet based tools and platforms which facilitate conversations, distribute information and spark engagement

Social media is now strongly embedded in Australian culture as a personal and professional tool for networking and communication and is increasingly being used as a core component of marketing and communications strategies employed by governments and businesses.

The desire to connect with governments using social media is increasing along with an expectation that this form of communication will be readily available and accessible.

Social media can support organisations in the following:

- providing information and getting feedback;
- demonstrating and showcasing the business personality/brand and culture;

- ensuring organisational transparency;
- improving internal communications; and
- market research at a low cost.

The advantages of social media:

- Always accessible and allows for 24hr communication
- allows for easy content creation/development/dissemination;
- can establish large, powerful networks;
- is always on;
- can reach a large audience; and
- Establish a brand through the usage of social media allows for the targeting of a different audience

Councils are using social media in a myriad of ways including event promotion, communication, getting community feedback from individuals and groups they may not necessarily reach, establishing ongoing networks, emergency management, recruitment, branding and consulting in strategic and specific issues.

Use of social media needs to be embedded within broader governance, communications and marketing strategies, an understanding that there is a need to choose the right tool for the task and awareness of what is appropriate or inappropriate use of social media.

Details on the variety of social media platforms is provided in Appendix 1.

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## Key principles

<i>Open</i>	<i>Use social media to share and promote access to information and services whilst also being transparent and accountable for actions</i>  <i>Social media will be used as a communication tool and will aid in facilitating professional development and online collaboration.</i>
<i>Collaborative</i>	<i>Create opportunities to listen to and engage with the public, parts of the communities the council might not otherwise reach,</i>  <i>Promote events within the municipality and collaborate with communities for events they are running</i>
<i>Appropriate</i>	<i>In developing, posting and responding to content, staff and elected members will uphold the values of the Council by acting with honesty, integrity, courtesy and professionalism and will not be discriminatory, defamatory, harassing or encourage law breaking.</i>
<i>Responsive</i>	<i>Empower staff to utilise social media to respond quickly to customers and emerging issues</i>
<i>Reliable</i>	<i>Maintain a consistent and quality social media presence that follows objectives and all key principles</i>  <i>Information disseminated through social media will be accurate, authorised and aligned with council</i>  <i>All elected members and employees are responsible for being familiar with this policy.</i>

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## Objectives

The Communications Team are responsible for the design and implementation of the Social Media Objectives and Strategy and reviewing them on a regular basis.

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## House rules

1. *Know and follow relevant department policies including the Code of Conduct.*
2. *Be aware when you mix your work and personal lives – the general public consider us 'the voice' of Dorset Council 24/7. Represent us well.*
3. *Be transparent and identify yourself when discussing Dorset Council related topics or issues. Use your real name, tell people you work for Council and be clear that you are giving your personal opinion.*
4. *Consider what you say before you say it. It will be on the web a long time.*
5. *Be original and respect copyright.*
6. *Use discretion. Take care not to publish information that should not be made public. If you aren't 100% sure, seek advice.*
7. *Play fair, be polite, be considerate – don't pick fights or engage in them, remember what you say will be public for a long time.*
8. *Stick to your area of expertise and talk about what you know.*
9. *It's a conversation, so be human, use your own voice and bring your personality into the conversation. It makes it more interesting and engaging*
10. *Admit your mistakes – we all make them so when you do, be quick to admit and correct them.*
11. *Make sure your personal online activities don't interfere with your job performance.*
12. *If it's official Council communication be dedicated, be constant – get permission, listen, plan, contribute regularly and keep listening.*

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## Links to other Council policies

Using social media is not without risks and challenges and this policy aims to address some areas of concern such as inappropriate use, record keeping and resourcing. Some other issues are best covered in other policies and those related policies are outlined here:

- Electronic Communications Policy
- Communications Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Information Privacy
- Customer Service Charter
- Community Consultation Policy & Guidelines
- Emergency Management Plan
- Personal Information Protection Policy



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## Corporate use of social media

### Authorised officers

#### Primary Social Media Officers:

- Executive Assistant - Governance
- Blue Derby Digital Marketing Specialist
- Customer Service/Community Liaison Officer

Elected members and staff intending to use social media to communicate about Council activity or policy should ensure appropriate authorisation as per the Responsibilities/ Delegations table below.

<i>Mayor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Should seek advice from the General Manager and/or Communications Team regarding tools available and should be communicating in their role as outlined in 27(1)(b) of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> (i.e. act as spokesperson of the council).</li></ul>
<i>General Manager</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Should ensure responsibilities/delegations in relation to Social Media are clearly defined and act as a source of advice to the Mayor.</li><li>• Should approve use of council branding.</li><li>• Should ensure compliance with social media provider conditions.</li><li>• Should act as the spokesperson on operational issues or issues of fact.</li></ul>
<i>Elected Members</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Should seek advice from the Mayor or General Manager and be sure not to speak on behalf of the Council as this is the Mayor's role (see above).</li><li>• A person authorised to comment on behalf of Council may be limited to particular topic or specific types of social media or both.</li><li>• Comment only on topics within your area of expertise and authority.</li><li>• Comply with objectives developed by the Communications Team.</li></ul>

<i>All Staff</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should have approval for use from relevant Director.</li> <li>• Must maintain records as per the Customer Service Charter.</li> <li>• Must comply with objectives developed by the Communications Team.</li> <li>• A person authorised to comment on behalf of Council may be limited to a particular topic or specific types of social media or both.</li> <li>• Comment only on topics within your area of expertise and authority and unless otherwise authorised comment only on matters which are operational or routine in their own area of responsibility.</li> </ul>
<i>Directors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training in responsible use of social media.</li> <li>• Training for staff.</li> </ul>
<i>Communications Team</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertaking training in responsible use of social media</li> <li>• Strategy/Action Plan</li> <li>• Objectives</li> <li>• Style, format and branding</li> <li>• Disclaimers, copyright</li> <li>• Following recording procedures</li> <li>• Monitoring and responding</li> <li>• Legal advice</li> <li>• Revising Social Media Policy as required</li> </ul>

Appendix 2 provides a Councillor Self-Assessment designed by the Tasmanian Integrity Commission which may assist Councillors in their social media related decision-making.

## Content

The General Manager has given responsibility to the Social Media Officers to plan who will write and post content, who will approve/moderate incoming content, and who will respond to negative and positive posts (and how). Corporate content will only be posted by authorised officers (who can be staff or elected members) as outlined earlier.

When communicating on behalf of Council, elected members and staff must identify their relationship with Council by their stating name and position. Generally, no-one should provide email or phone number contacts.

Uploaded content will only disclose on information which is classified as suitable for the public domain.

Content Managers will ensure the information posted is accurate and not misleading in any way.

In developing, posting and responding to content, authorised officers WILL:

- uphold the values of the Council by acting with honesty, integrity, courtesy and professionalism;
- ensure that all relevant legislation has been complied with and that there is adherence to Council codes, policies and procedures;
- avoid political bias;
- act in a timely manner; and
- take steps to avoid real or potential conflicts of interest.

When developing or posting content, authorised officers must NOT:

- use abusive, profane or sexually explicit language or content;
- undertake commercial solicitations or transactions;
- use copyright or ownership protected materials without appropriate approvals;
- be discriminatory, defamatory, or encourage law breaking;
- compromise council, employee or system safety;
- spam; or
- air personal campaigns.

## Content removal

Council reserves the right to remove certain content such as illegal or offensive material. Material that is reasonably critical of Council will not be deleted.

Council has developed a range of 'House Rules' which are outlined on the Council Facebook page to ensure that the public are aware of our terms and conditions regarding information posted and expectations.

Council will always state when a post or content which has been removed does not comply with the Social Media Policy and provide a link to this Policy.

## Monitoring/moderating/responding

As a minimum requirement, council will monitor social media content and exchanges at least once daily, Monday to Friday and establish whether:

- comments need replies or removal.
- current content is factual, accurate and up-to-date.
- posts are relevant.
- new information needs uploading.

Council will make use of digital monitoring tools whenever available as part of their evaluation of social media activities.

Dorset Council specifies the kind of comments or feedback that the authorised officer will and will not respond to.

## Access

Staff members who are authorised to post comments on behalf of Council must do so from the administrative profiles set up for Dorset Council.

## Branding

The brand is the corporate identity of Council and can take many forms (name, sign, symbol, colour combination, slogan). A clear brand is an essential tool in online communications.

The Council logo should always be attached to corporate content.

Authorised officers will adhere to council's corporate style guide when developing and uploading content.

## Engagement

Social Media tools may be used for community engagement as appropriate. Consideration will first be given to what the desired outcome is, the resources available and relevance of social media tools.

## Copyright

Material which is copyrighted (applications, audio, video, graphics, images, photographs, publications) will not be used unless prior written consent is obtained from the creator or copyright owner and the original author or source of the material is acknowledged.

Authorised officers will be diligent in their consideration of brand, copyright, fair use and trademarks.

## Website

Information provided through social media will be replicated on the Council's website and drive traffic back to the website wherever possible.

## Risks

A risk analysis with related mitigation strategies will be undertaken for each new planned aspect of social media use. Such analysis will consider things like lack of followers, blurring of professional and personal communications, online activism and negative comments, expectation of instant responses, breaches of law or codes of conduct, unauthorised posts.

The liabilities section of this policy covers off on some specific risks but legal advice should be sought where appropriate.

In considering how to proceed, Council will give detailed consideration as to:

- The protection of privacy and the confidentiality of Council and ratepayer information.
- Preventing disclosure of corporate information outside that which is authorised or publically available.
- How Council's intellectual property and copyright will be protected.
- The terms of service for nominated social media sites.
- How Council will respond to orchestrated campaigns by skilled social media users.

- The level of response for issues raised by people outside the municipality.
- What constitutes a representation as defined under the *Local Government Act* (for example a tweet is not a representation).

## Record management

In using social media, Council will comply with the requirements of the *Archives Act 1983* and Dorset Council's Customer Service Charter.

## Resourcing/training

Council will ensure that social media activities are adequately resourced to allow for content development, monitoring, interpreting the volume and content of messages and responding as required.

## Evaluation

Council's social media activity will be evaluated through simple metrics which are sustainable and related to the desired outcomes.

The mechanisms for evaluation will be determined in relation to each new planned use of social media.

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## Misuse of corporate social media

### Prohibited or offensive activities

Staff and elected members must not post or respond to material or content that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist or infringes copyright.

Staff and elected members must not establish fictitious names or identities deliberately intended to deceive, mislead or lie.

Staff and elected members must not bring Council's integrity into disrepute, or harm the operations or reputation of Council.

Staff and elected members must separate personal opinions from professional ones.

Staff and elected members must avoid the use of business email addresses for personal social media logins.

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## Personal use of social media

Council will not require staff or elected members to hand over credentials to a personal social media account. However, personal use must comply with this policy.

### In work time

Council supports the use of social media for professional purposes such as communicating with fellow employees or professional colleagues, acquiring or sharing information, and use for educational or professional development activities.

Incidental use of social media during work time is permissible provided the use of equipment and consumption of space on the network is kept to a minimum and does not compromise, pre-empt or impact adversely upon council business. Such use should not interfere with productivity, effectiveness and legitimate work activities and the time spent on personal use must be kept to a minimum. Excessive use will not be tolerated.

Council will be monitoring the usage of social media during work hours on a regular basis. Any excessive use will be brought to management's attention and followed up appropriately.

### Making comments about Council

In using social media for personal communication, staff and elected members must not purport to represent the Council. It is permissible to mention where you work provided the website is appropriate but you must make it clear you don't speak on behalf of council.

Staff and elected members can post public information about Council – that is information which can be found on Council's website. They may also join and participate in official Council social media sites.

In using social media for personal communications, staff must not:

- damage the reputation of Council,
- use Council's intellectual property or copyrighted materials,
- disclose sensitive or confidential information, or
- post offensive or defamatory comments – particularly about the Council, council staff or elected members.

Consideration should be given to the following:

1. Could what you are doing harm the reputation of your Council?
2. Are you disclosing Council material that you are not authorised to disclose?
3. Have you made it clear to others when your contribution is as a private individual, not an employee of council?
4. Are you willing to defend your post to your Director?
5. Would you be comfortable saying it to a stranger at a bus stop or posting it on a public shop window?
6. Are you behaving with integrity, respect and accountability?

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## Breach of policy penalties.

Staff and elected members must comply fully with the policy at all times.

If you are not sure if an activity complies, speak to your Director, General Manager or Mayor.

Non-compliance is a serious matter and appropriate action will be taken.

Nothing in this policy should be interpreted as diminishing or attempting an employee's right to engage in lawful industrial activities.

An Elected Member breaching this policy may be subject to a Code of Conduct complaint (as per *the Local Government Act 1993*) and the *Local Government (General) Regulations 2015*.

Staff breaching this policy may be subject to disciplinary action as per the Code of Conduct Policy.

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## Legal issues/liabilities

### Defamation/offensive/obscene

Social media can blur private and public domains and activities on social media platforms should be considered public activities. Despite the availability of privacy functions on social media platforms, the possibility exists for content to be shared beyond intended recipients. Additionally it



should be noted that the terms and conditions of use for most social media sites state that all content becomes the property of the site on which it is posted.

Online content is essentially permanent and should NEVER be considered private.

Use of offensive, obscene or defamatory content may breach a number of Federal and State Laws.

Staff and elected members will not post offensive, obscene or defamatory content.

### Privacy/confidentiality

In using social media, staff and elected members will be cognisant of requirements under the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004* and the *Local Government Act 1993*.

Personal and sensitive information cannot be published without permission of the person to which that information belongs.

Staff and elected members will not disclose confidential council information, including but not limited to matters relating to closed meetings of Council.

### Security risks

Staff and elected members will be cognisant of security risks to Council through the use of social media and will comply with the Electronic Communications Policy in relation to use of equipment.

Staff and elected members will also give consideration to security risks in relation to content development and uploading, recognising that while one small fact alone might not form a security risk collectively all posted information can form part of a jigsaw puzzle that can be used against the interests of Council.

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## Dispute resolution

Disputes will be managed in accordance with Council's dispute resolution section of the Dorset Council Customer Service Charter.

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## Appendices

### 1. Social media platforms

Social media platforms vary in their level of engagement from 1:1 (eg Email, Personal Messages, Chat) to 1:Many (Blogs, photo sharing), Many:Many (Forums) and Few:Few (gated – follow me services).

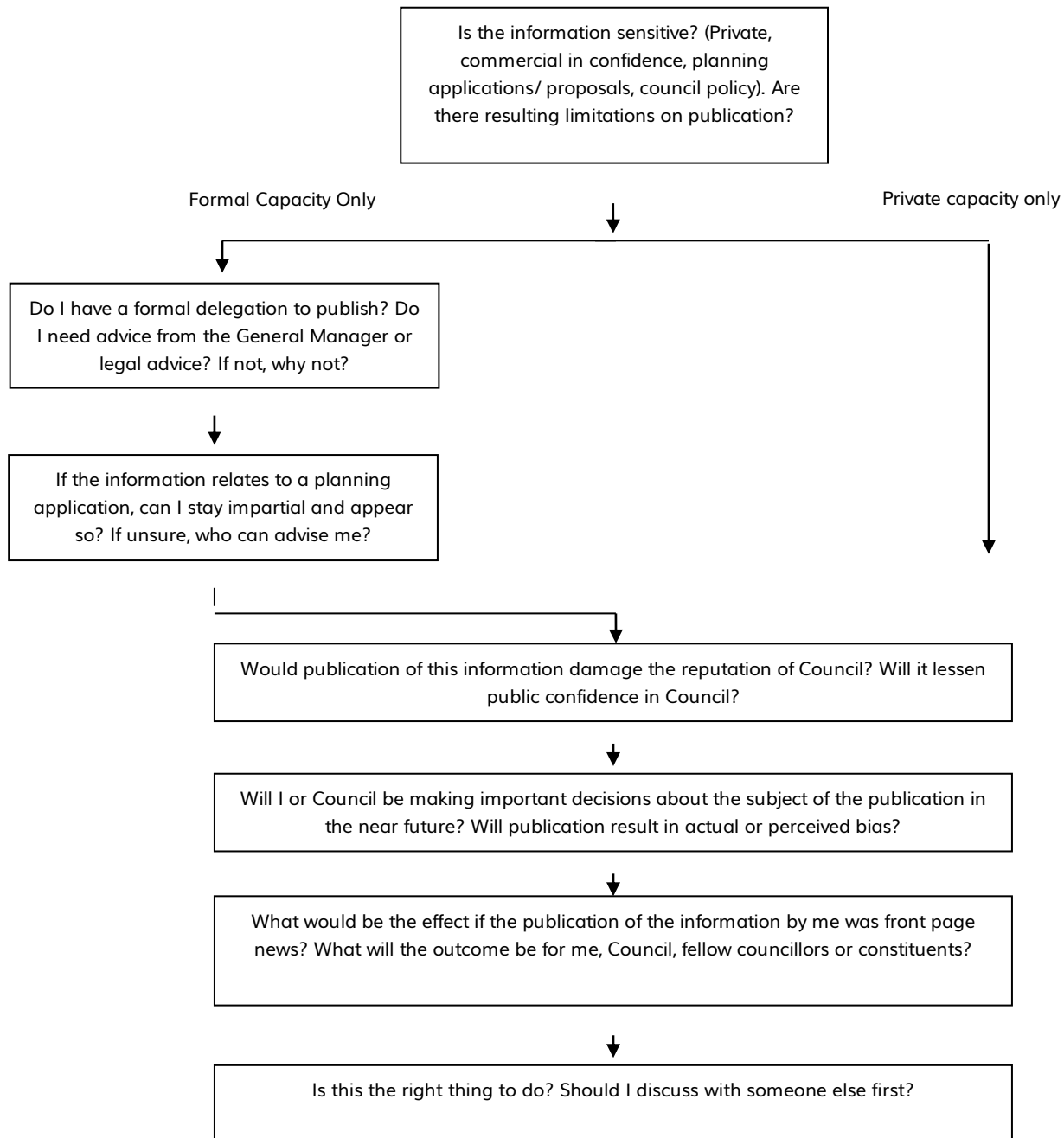
Wiki	Collaborative websites where users can create web pages and have others add, remove and maintain information on a topic or thread.
Social Networking Users can upload content that is used to connect, communicate and share with others, building online communities with shared interests.	Facebook Popular free site that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. <sup>1</sup>
	Twitter Social networking and micro blogging site enabling users to send and read short messages called Tweets.
	Linked In This site is geared towards companies and industry professionals looking to make new business contacts or keep in touch with previous co-workers, affiliates and clients. <sup>2</sup>
	Instagram A photo sharing and social network program with distinctive visual features.
Video sharing Sites	YouTube A video sharing website which allows users to upload, share and view videos.
Podcasting	Sites supporting the posting of audio files that can be downloaded and used by others.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/Facebook>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.hudsonhorizons.com/Our-Company/Internet-Glossary/LinkedIn.htm>

## 2. Questions for consideration by elected members.



Howard A.E (2012), *Connecting with Communities: How Local Government is Using Social Media to Engage with Citizens*, ANZOG Institute for Governance at the University of Canberra and Australian Centre for Excellence in Local Government,