

DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR MEMBERS

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1. ABOUT THIS POLICY

- 1.1 This policy has been adopted by Dover District Council to
- (a) minimise the risks to the Council through use of social media.
 - (b) minimise the risk of members being the subject of complaint under the Code of Conduct for Members
- 1.2 This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Wikipedia, Whisper, Instagram, Vine, Tumblr and all other social networking sites, internet postings and blogs. It applies to use of social media for Council purposes as well as personal use that may affect the Council in any way.
- 1.3 This policy does not form part of the Code of Conduct for Members and the Council may amend it at any time.

2. GENERAL OBLIGATIONS

- 2.1 Members must comply with this policy:-
- (a) whenever they act in their capacity as a member or co-opted member of the Council or,
 - (b) at all times when using the Council's IT resources and communications systems.

3. PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- 3.1 This policy does not purport to regulate a member's personal use of social media. Members should, when using social media in a personal capacity make it clear in their social media postings, or in their personal profile, that they are speaking on their own behalf, use a separate personal e-mail account and address, avoid reference to being a councillor and reference to issues concerning the council.

4. COUNCILLOR USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- 4.1 If members are using their social media profile in their capacity as councillor, they must disclose their affiliation to the Council on their profile or in any social media postings, they must state that their views do not represent those of the Council (unless they are authorised to speak on the Council's behalf).

Members should also ensure that their profile and any content they post are consistent with the image they present to the Council and the public.

5. GUIDELINES FOR RESPONSIBLE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- 5.1 Members must be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that they are personally responsible for all communications which will be published on the internet for anyone to see.
- 5.2 If members are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, they should refrain from posting it until they have discussed with the Monitoring Officer

6. COMPLIANCE WITH RELATED POLICIES AND AGREEMENTS

- 6.1 Members must never use social media in a way that breaches any of the Council's other policies or the Council's Code of Conduct for Members. If an internet post would breach any of the Council's policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. For example, members must not use social media to:
- (a) breach the Council's ICT Policy;
 - (b) breach the Council's obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies;
 - (c) breach any obligations contained in those policies or the Code of Conduct for Members relating to confidentiality;
 - (d) harass or bully any person;
 - (e) unlawfully discriminate against any person **OR** breach the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy;
 - (f) breach the Council's Data Protection Policy (for example, never disclose personal information about any person online); or
 - (g) breach any other laws or regulatory requirements
- 6.2 Members should never provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites, as such references, positive and negative, can be attributed to the Council and create legal liability for both the member and the Council.
- 6.3 The Council is mindful that members of the public and the staff of the council and its contractors have not sought election to public office and public life and have rights to private and family life under the European Convention on Human Rights. Accordingly, in their use of social media members must

respect these rights and not record or publish visual or audio recordings of members of the public and the staff of the council and contractors, or publish comments about them unless to do so is both reasonable and legally justifiable in terms of their convention protections.

7. PROHIBITED USE

7.1 Members must avoid making any social media communications that could reasonably be regarded as bringing their office of the Council into disrepute.

7.2 Members must not use social media to

- (a) defame or disparage any person;
- (b) nor to harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against any person;
- (c) to make false or misleading statements; or to impersonate any person.

7.3 Members must not express opinions on behalf of the Council via social media, unless expressly authorised to do so.

7.4 Members must not post comments or do anything to jeopardise the Council's confidential information and intellectual property. Members must not include the Council's logos or other trademarks in any social media posting or in their profile on any social media.

7.5 Any misuse of social media should be reported to the Monitoring Officer.

8. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMPLYING WITH THIS POLICY

8.1 Members are personally responsible for operating within the boundaries of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it

9. MONITORING

9.1 The Council reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review social media activity, without further notice. This is to ensure that this policy and other relevant Council's ICT policies are being complied with.

10. BREACH OF THIS POLICY

10.1 Although a breach or non-compliance with this policy would not of itself be a breach of the Code of Conduct for Members any breach of this policy may be relied upon as evidence that a member has failed to comply with a specific

requirement of the Code of Conduct for Members, for example, that a member has bullied someone or intimidated them under paragraph 3(2)(a) of the Code of Conduct for Members.

- 10.2 At least annually, the Monitoring Officer will report to the Standards Committee in anonymized form any breaches of this policy that don't result in a breach of the Code of Conduct.

11. MAINTENANCE OF THIS POLICY

- 11.1 The Standards Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy, but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for its operation to the Monitoring Officer.
- 11.2 Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks lies with the Standards Committee who will review this policy on the advice of the Monitoring Officer and/or as and when necessary to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.