



Shifnal Town Council

Social Media Policy

1 INTRODUCTION

This Policy aims to safeguard users of the world wide web and representatives of Shifnal Town Council ('the Council') in the engagement of social media mediums.

Shifnal Town Council will endeavour to utilise social media in order to engage and interact with residents, stakeholders and communities. This usage will be underpinned by it being representative and inclusive of all communities that the Council serve and engage with.

The use of social media will not replace other forms of traditional communication, but should be seen as complementary to it.

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. This interaction may be through computers, mobile phones and tablet technology, but may extend in the future.

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)
- Micro-blogging (e.g., Twitter)
- Message boards (e.g., BBC Message board)
- Wiki's (e.g., Wikipedia)

2.1 Principles

- To publish information about the work of Shifnal Town Council to a wider audience.
- To avoid entering into online debates or arguments about the Council's work. Social media must **NOT** be used in the recruitment process for employees 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.

2.2 Approved Council Social Media

- Town Council website
- Facebook page
- Twitter account

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Examples of acceptable corporate content are:

- Marketing campaigns
- Consultation documents
- News feed and emergency information
- Event listings
- Key dates
- Short debates and quick comments on hot topics and relevant news (discussion board)
- Polls and information gathering
- Useful links

2.3 The following outlines the limits of their use

- An official account on any social media website may only be set-up with consent from the Town Council.
- Once approved each account will be set up by the Town Clerk.
- Only authorised Officers may use these accounts to post online and access to the account is strictly limited. The Town Council's social media accounts are managed and monitored regularly by the Town Clerk. Only the Town Clerk or an authorised Officer are allowed to post links to the corporate website, partner websites, 'Useful' links for example local transport sites etc, links to other Facebook pages, local media e.g., Shropshire Star, National organisations.
- All information published on the internet must comply with the Town Council's confidentiality policy and data protection.
- Social media accounts will primarily be used to promote the 'good news' and information, supplementing content already published on the Town Council's website.
- Any Officer, Councillor or member of the public who becomes aware of social networking activity that would be deemed inappropriate should make the Town Clerk aware as soon as possible.

2.4 Facebook

The Town Clerk manages the Council's Facebook page. Facebook pages are used to highlight news, make announcements, engage with the community and share information.

Comments posted on and messages received on the Facebook page are views of individuals and do not represent the views of Shifnal Town Council.

Request for something to be posted on Shifnal Town Council's Facebook page should be directed to the Town Clerk.



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Social media moderation policy

Shifnal Town Council's Facebook page is reactively moderated. The Council cannot accept responsibility for the content of any comment.

The Council reserve the right to remove comments received on Facebook that:

- Contain abusive, obscene, indecent or offensive language, or link to obscene or offensive material.
- Contain swear words or other sorts of profanity.
- Are completely removed from the topic of conversation or are not relevant to the item posted on the wall.
- Contain abusive language towards an individual involved in the thread, other organisations or the page administrator.
- Constitute spam or promote or advertise products (except where it is for an event, publication or similar item that has direct relevance to the subject of discussion). Information about locating and sharing knowledge and expertise is welcomed but within the specific discussion.
- Are designed to cause nuisance to the page administrator or other users.

For serious and/or persistent breaches of the moderation policy, we reserve the right to prevent users from posting further comments.

As a general principle the Council will interact with relevant and appropriate organisations, stakeholder groups and residents when it is appropriate and within the remit of the Council. Being "followed" or being "liked" or being "a friend" by the Council in no way represents an endorsement.

2.5 Twitter

The Shifnal Town Council Twitter account is managed by the Town Clerk.

If you follow Shifnal Town Council on Twitter you can expect regular tweets covering:

- News and press releases
- Statements
- Photos
- Retweets of notable announcements
- Information forwarded on from Shropshire Council

If Shifnal Town Council follows a Twitter account it does not imply any kind of endorsement.

The Town Clerk or other authorised Officer will review all @ messages regularly and re-tweet where they feel appropriate.

Shifnal Town Council also will not normally reply to direct messages. The limitations of Twitter's format means that we would not be able to give a full and useful reply. The Council,



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therefore, ask that in these instances contact is made with the Town Council using the contact form on the website.

All tweets must be:

- Timely and appropriate
- Mindful of the audience
- Accurate without any spelling mistakes or typos
- Factually correct and without personal opinion
- Concise and not designed to promote a discussion
- In line with data protection

Any complaints/issued raised on Twitter should be reported to the Town Clerk.

2.6 Use of Photos and Video

Only the Town Clerk or authorised Officer has permission to upload photos and videos. The appropriate permissions must be obtained for all imagery

3. LEGAL AND STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 The 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, the Data Protection Act 1998 and The General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679.

3.2 Council use of social media must be undertaken in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures. All social media accounts and sites held in the name of Shifnal Town Council remain the property of the Council and all passwords and access should be relinquished by employees on request.

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

3.4 Employees using social media sites for business purposes must maintain political neutrality and not indicate individual political opinions. Business contacts made during the course of any employees involvement in Council social media accounts are regarded as Council confidential information, and as such employees will be required to delete all such details from personal social networking accounts on request.

3.5 In the six-week run up to a local or general – also known as the pre-election ("Purdah") period – the Council must not do or say anything that could be seen in any way to support any political party or candidate. The 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 MANAGEMENT

All applications, except the Mayor's Facebook page, will be managed and branded by the Office staff to reflect the ownership of the accounts. The elected members are encouraged to offer content which, if appropriate, would then be introduced onto the application by the Office staff. The passwords of the applications will be controlled by the office.

4.1 Access

In general, the applications will be monitored and responded to during normal office hours.

5 GUIDANCE FOR COUNCIL OFFICERS ON THE USE OF COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA

- Officers 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 Council publicised policies and procedures, or approved by the Town Clerk.
- 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.
- Officers must remember that they will be seen as ambassadors for the Council and should always act in a responsible and socially aware manner.

5.1 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 Shifnal Town Council. If you use social media in your official capacity as a Councillor you should always be mindful of the Code, and of the seven Nolan 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 and remove them as soon as possible to avoid any perception that you condone such views.
- 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 Council facilities are used appropriately – if using a 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.



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- 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 incites violence or hatred.

6 ENFORCEMENT

Any breach of the Guiding Principles of Use will result in the application or offending content being removed and the publishing rights of the responsible Council representative being suspended.

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.

Any communications or content that is published which causes damage to the Council, any of its employees or any third party's reputation, if deemed to be an act of misconduct then the Council's Disciplinary Procedure will be applied. If elected members are involved with any inappropriate usage, they will be referred to the principle monitoring office.

7 FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

As social media is evolving all the time the Council will review and update this document as and when required.