



Keighley Town Council

Social Media & Communications Policy

APPENDICES

Appendix B – Social Media Guidelines

This policy aims to guide Council activity in respect of the media and the use of social media.

Why we need a policy: its purpose

- To enable the Council collectively to be a reliable, timely, regular and dependable provider of information
- To enable all Council communications to reflect accurately the position of the Council
- To consult, interact, distribute information and be clear and transparent about the Council's activities and decisions
- To enable residents, electors, other stakeholders and organisations to contact the Council
- To enable the Council to contact residents, electors, other stakeholders and organisations
- To enable residents, electors and organisations to share community information with each other
- To support, guide and assist councillors with their communications, both internal to other councillors and staff and external to members of the public and other organisations
- To meet legislative requirements.

The media policy also assists councillors in abiding by the 7 Nolan Principles (and helps demonstrate they are achieving them):

- Selflessness – act in the public interest
- Integrity – under no obligation to or influence of other people
- Objectivity – act fairly & impartially
- Accountability – submit to public scrutiny
- Openness – open & transparent
- Honesty
- Leadership

Background documents

This policy has drawn from the following:

- The Information Commissioner's Office guidance under the Model Publications Scheme.
- The NALC Parish Council media plan
- The Society of Local Council Clerks Society social media policy
- Applicable parts of the SLCC's advice note on email and internet use.

Who does this policy apply to?

All employees, members and volunteers are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality and interests of the Council.

Breach of this policy by employees may be dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.

Responsibility for implementation of the policy

The Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.

The Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to our work.

All employees, members and volunteers should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the Clerk.

Employees will be required to sign that they have received and read this policy document.

Monitoring and reviewing

Council will be responsible for reviewing this policy annually to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

Media Policy

Introduction

1. Keighley Town Council is committed to the provision of accurate information about its governance, decisions and activities. If information is not available via the Council's media or other policies, the Council's clerk should be contacted.
2. The Council will, where possible, co-operate with those whose work involves gathering material for publication in any form including use of the internet ("the media").
3. This policy explains how the Council may work with members of the media to meet the above objectives in accordance with the legal requirements and restrictions that apply.

Legal requirements and restrictions

5. This policy is subject to the Council's obligations which are set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1986, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998, other legislation which may apply and the Council's standing orders and financial regulations.

The Council's financial regulations and relevant standing orders referenced in this policy are available via the Council's publication scheme.

6. The Council cannot disclose confidential information or information the disclosure of which is prohibited by law. The Council cannot disclose information if this is prohibited under the terms of a court order, by legislation, the Council's standing orders, under contract or by common law. Councillors are subject to additional restrictions about the disclosure of confidential information which arise from the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council, a copy of which is available via the Council's publication scheme. The particularly relevant section is:

He/she shall not disclose information which is confidential or where disclosure is prohibited by law.

Media and public involvement in meetings

7. A meeting of the Council and its committees is open to the public unless the meeting resolves to exclude them because their presence at the meeting is prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business or other special reason(s) stated in the resolution.

In accordance with the Council's standing orders, a person may be required to leave a meeting of the Council and its committees if their disorderly behaviour obstructs the business of the meeting.

8. Where a meeting of the Council and its committees include an opportunity for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the Council's standing orders. The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a meeting of the Council and its committees (which includes e.g. using a mobile phone or tablet, recording for a TV/radio broadcast, providing commentary on blogs, web forums, or social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) which enable a person not at the meeting to see, hear or be given commentary about the meeting is permitted unless:

(i) the meeting has resolved to hold all or part of the meeting without the public present or

(ii) such activities disrupt the proceedings or (iii) paragraph 9 below applies.

9. The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a child or vulnerable adult at a Council or committee meeting is not permitted unless an adult responsible for them has given permission.

10. The Council shall, as far as it is practicable, provide reasonable facilities for anyone taking a report of a Council or committee meeting.

11. The Council's standing orders will confirm if attendance by the public, their participation, photographing, recording, filming or other reporting is permitted at a meeting of a sub-committee.

12. The Council has adopted a policy 'Guidance for the Recording of Meetings' which is available on the Town Council website or from the Clerk.

Communications with the media and other organisations and councillor responsibilities

13. This policy does not seek to regulate councillors in their private capacity.

14. The Council's communications with the media should always represent the corporate position and views of the Council. If the views of councillors are different to the Council's corporate position and views, they must make this clear.

15. The Council's Clerk, or in their absence, the Town Mayor (or in their absence the Deputy Town Mayor) may contact the media if the Council wants to provide information, a statement or other material about the Council.

16. The Clerk, the Town Mayor, or in their absence the Town Deputy Mayor, or, if relevant, the Chair of a Committee, will be spokespeople for the Council.

17. Councillors authoring contributions to newsletters of other organisations on behalf of the Council should check any draft with the Clerk before submitting for publication.

18. Councillors invited to speak about the work of the council to any organisation or group should consult the Clerk about the engagement, before confirming attendance. Any speech or presentations given should be first checked and agreed with the Clerk to ensure the Council's position is accurately reflected.

19. Subject to the obligations on councillors not to disclose information referred to in paragraph 5 above and not to misrepresent the Council's position, councillors are free to communicate their position and views.

Social media policy

Introduction

1. This policy is intended to help employees including clerks, RFO's, part-time, fixed-term and casual employees (collectively referred to as employees in this policy), members and volunteers make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as posts, blogs, social networking websites, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles, such as on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube.

2. This policy outlines the standards required by employees, members and volunteers when using social media in relation to the Council's activities, the circumstances in which the Council monitors an individual's use of social media and the action it will take in respect of breaches of this policy.

3. This policy supplements the Council's I.T Policy.

Using Keighley Town Council's social media sites

4. Only the Clerk and named Officers agreed by Policy & Governance Committee, are permitted to post material on a website or social media platform in the Council's name and on its behalf.

5. Councillors must not comment as individuals under the Council's name (for example, posting to the Council's Facebook page and giving their own name as author of the post.)

6. Any inquiries received through social media sites will be acknowledged by the Town Clerk or a nominated officer.

Using social media

1. Town Council recognises the importance of social media in shaping public thinking about our council and community. We also recognise the importance of our employees, member and volunteers joining in and helping shape local government conversation and direction through interaction in social media.

2. Before using social media on any matter which might affect the interests of the council employees, employees, members and volunteers must:

- have read and understood this policy and the council's other media and communications policies, and

Rules for use of social media

1. Whenever you are permitted to use social media in accordance with this policy, you must adhere to the following general rules:

- Do not upload, post, tweet/retweet or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content
- Any employee, volunteer or member who feels that they have been harassed or bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague acting on behalf of the council onto a social media website should inform the Clerk or the Town Mayor or, in their absence, the Deputy Town Mayor.

- Commercially sensitive, personal private or confidential information should never be disclosed. If there is uncertainty about whether the information intended to be shared falls within one of these categories, this should be discussed with the Clerk.
- Only issues that have been discussed and agreed by a committee of the council or with the approval of the Town Clerk or information about the council's meetings, events, agendas, minutes and policy documents can be posted to the council's social media sites.
- Third party content: advertisements for commercial interests will not generally be shared, posted or hosted on the Council's sites. Details of community events run by primarily not-for-profit organisations are acceptable; however, the posting of details of any fund-raising appeals or events must be agreed by the Town Clerk.
- Any content belonging to a third party should not be uploaded, posted or forwarded unless the third party gives consent or the information is already in the public domain.
- Before linking to a third party website, any terms and conditions of that website should be checked to ensure linking is permitted.
- Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact any contribution might make to people's perceptions of the council.
- Do not escalate heated discussions. Refer complaints and inquiries to the clerk giving contact details.
- Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory.
- Councillors need to be aware that if they publish contact details they can be accessed and used widely by people.
- Councillors and staff must never publish anyone else's contact details without their permission.

Monitoring use of social media websites

1. Employees should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for council purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken against employees under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

2. Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against individual councillors or the Council.

3. In particular, a serious case of uploading, posting forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will probably amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):

- pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature)
- a false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation
- material, which is offensive, obscene, criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the council, members, or our employees
- confidential information about the council or anyone else
- any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for you or the council); or
- material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

4. Any such action will be addressed under the Disciplinary Procedure and for employees may result in summary dismissal.
5. Where evidence of misuse is found the Council may undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure, involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or managers involved in the investigation. If necessary, such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.
6. Anyone who notices any use of social media by other employees or volunteers in breach of this policy is asked to report it to the Clerk.

Policy for use of Facebook

The following text has previously been reproduced on the Keighley Town Council Facebook page – and may serve as guidance for other social media sites.

The Keighley Town Council Facebook pages intends to:

Provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within Keighley Parish and promote positive comments from residents within the parish.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Keighley Town Council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's goals, we ask you to follow these guidelines:

- *Be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarity, threats or abuse of language will not be tolerated.*
- *Differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including Keighley Town Councillors or staff, are not.*
- *Share freely and be generous but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.*
- *Stay on topic.*
- *Refrain from using the Facebook page for commercial purposes or to market products.*

The site is not monitored 24/7 and we will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, we will endeavour to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people.

Sending a message/post via Facebook will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and we will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through the Facebook channel. Instead, please contact the council through the clerk townclerk@Keighley.gov.uk

We retain the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- *Obscene or racist content*
- *Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language*
- *Potentially libellous statements*
- *Plagiarised material; any material in violation of any laws, including copyright*
- *Private, personal information published without consent*
- *Information or links unrelated to the content of the forum*
- *Commercial promotions or spam*

Non-compliance will not be tolerated and may result in a ban.

Keighley Town Council is not responsible for the accuracy of content posted by any subscriber in any forum; opinions expressed in comments on Keighley Town Council social media forums do not necessarily represent those of Keighley Town Council.

All comments, once posted, become the property of Keighley Town Council and we reserve the right to reproduce, distribute, publish, display or edit. Derivative work can also be created from such postings or content, and used for any purpose, in any form and on any other media.

Keighley Town Council is not responsible, liable for and does not endorse the privacy practices of Facebook or any linked websites. Your use of Facebook and any linked websites is at your own risk.

Keighley Town Council assumes no responsibility or liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred as a result of any use or reliance upon the information and material contained within or downloaded from these websites.

Facebook may occasionally be unavailable, and we accept no responsibility for this lack of service.

The presence of any advertisement on Facebook is not an endorsement of the authenticity or quality of the goods, services or website and Keighley Town Council will not be held responsible for any claims arising in that respect.

We will not engage in/with, and we discourage posts or comments on, issues of a party-political nature.

This comment policy may be revised at any time.

By choosing to comment and/or utilise any Keighley Town Council social media site, users are deemed to agree to this policy.

Appendix B.

Social media guidelines

General advice

Recognise that posts are more likely to be seen at these times:

- weekdays: 7-9am & 5-7pm
- Saturday: same as weekdays excluding older and younger people.
- Sunday: 1-3pm
- News stories should be shared as soon as possible to get the most response.
- When writing posts. Start the sentence with the most important information first. Use simple syntax (I.E. avoid using contractions and commas) and keep it short.
- Use hashtags relevant to the area/subject. Try and use hashtags other people are using instead of inventing your own (e.g. #Keighley will reach more people than #KeighleyTownCouncil).
- Emojis (when used in the right context) can help to draw attention to the text
- Always use images as part of posts (where appropriate) - squares work best on Facebook/instagram. Landscape works best for Twitter.

Facebook specific advice

- Aim to fit text within 2-3 lines
- If you're writing a larger amount of text. Try and start the first sentence with something snappy to grab people's attention.
- Try and post a link without having the web address in the post (can depend on what device you use).
- Use no more than 4-5 emojis.
- Use no more than two hashtags.
- Schedule Facebook posts to ensure they're within the times stated above (unless it's something to be posted immediately):
- The public facing Facebook page is the furthest reaching tool when it comes to advertising events and etc.
- Facebook is the most widely used with 51% of adults using it more than once a day.

Twitter specific advice

- Keep text simple and direct.
- Use hashtags where applicable. Hashtags are a lot more relevant on Twitter (Twitter recommends using around 3).
- Use as many emojis as you please. Twitter is more personality driven.
- Only ¼ of adults use Twitter regularly, the rest use it less than once a week. Instagram
- Keep text simple and direct (there's no limit here but you can't use paragraphs).
- Use hashtags where applicable. Hashtags are also relevant to Instagram.
- If Infographics are used, make sure they're used at a ratio no higher than 1:1 (too many infographics can make the account look as if it's controlled by a 'robot').