

# Use of Social Media Guidance

This guidance applies to all employees of Carmarthenshire County Council



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## 1. Guidance statement

- 1.1 This is the Carmarthenshire County Council Social Media Guidance. Carmarthenshire County Council will ensure all employees are aware of what is considered to be acceptable use of social media, both professionally and personally.

## 2. Purpose and scope

- 2.1 This guidance paper sets out Carmarthenshire County Council's (the Council's) policy regarding the use of social media for both work-related and personal purposes. It applies to all employees employed by the Council.
- 2.2 This guidance does not relate to Members of The Council who should refer to the Code of Conduct applicable to them.
- 2.3 Used appropriately and within the prescribed guidelines, social media is a useful way through which the Council can communicate, connect and engage with the people of Carmarthenshire and wider afield. It is key to the corporate strategy of the Council, to demonstrate the Council's commitment to meaningful open and interactive participation.
- 2.4 This guidance aims to provide a guide to help the Council and its employees to avoid problems which arise when social media is not used appropriately, including the risk of disciplinary action, damage to the Council's reputation and/or legal action being taken against the Council. When using social media, it is important that any activities are performed in line with the Council's policies, procedures and guidance listed in point 10.1 of this paper.
- 2.5 This guidance paper relates to the use of social media across all platforms including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Vimeo, Youtube, Pinterest and Wordpress (Blogs).

## 3. Standards of Behaviour in relation to internet use

- 3.1 Procedures for the use of the internet by employees using Council-owned equipment and facilities is governed by the Internet Usage and Monitoring Policy Version 2.0, Employees are reminded that this guidance states: -

'No employee, consultant or contractor will attempt to access or transmit content that in any way may be interpreted as insulting, disruptive or offensive

or which may be harmful to employees' morale. Examples of prohibited material include but are not limited to:

- Sexually explicit messages, images, cartoons, jokes or movie files
- Profanity, obscenity, slander, or libel
- Ethnic, religious, or racial slurs
- Any content that could be construed as harassment or disparagement of others based on their race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, language, disability, religion, age, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, parental status, marital status or political beliefs'

## 4. Personal use of Social Media

- 4.1 Whilst the Council respects the legal rights of all individuals, employees need to be aware that what they do and say outside of work can often compromise their position inside work. It is important to note that other people's perceptions need to be considered when using social media.
- 4.2 This guidance paper covers the responsibilities of employees both inside and outside of work time. All employees must pay due regard to the standards set out in the policies, procedures and guidance which are listed in full, in point 10.1.
- 4.3 Social networking sites must not be accessed during working hours for personal use. Employees should note that this includes mobile phone and internet enabled products e.g. tablets.
- 4.4 Employees should never publish or disclose on social media any information about the Council which is not already in the public arena. A breach of confidentiality could result in disciplinary and / or legal action being taken against the employee.
- 4.5 Do not publish or report on conversations that are private or internal to the Council. Do not cite or reference customers, service users, employees, managers, partners or suppliers. Be mindful that whatever you publish may be in the public arena for a long time and that doing so may result in disciplinary action being taken against you.
- 4.6 Ensure that your online activities do not interfere with your job, your colleagues or commitments to customers and the public. Your online activities must always adhere to the relevant policies, procedures and guidance listed in point 10.
- 4.7 Employees identified as working for the council must act reasonably and responsibly at all times and uphold the reputation of Carmarthenshire County Council. Work related issues should not be discussed on social networking sites even when the issue is anonymised. Employees must not use the Council's logo

on personal web pages.

- 4.8 Even when using social media for personal use, relationships with all persons should always be regarded. The Council acknowledges that in smaller communities, the lines can become blurred particularly where the service user is also a friend or acquaintance – in such cases, employees should disclose an interest to their line manager - common sense and discretion should be applied and all employees must be aware of the provisions of the Code of Conduct in this regard. In all cases, clarity should be sought from your line manager. The guidance in relation to service users is that employees should not befriend service users that they have to maintain a professional relationship with or individuals they support. Employees should adhere to the close personal associations guidance.
- 4.9 Using social media to attack or abuse colleagues, customers/the public or suppliers (harassment and “cyber” bullying) will not be tolerated by the Council. Respect the privacy, feelings, reputation, and position of others you work with. Don’t upload or tag colleagues in posts which are defamatory, discriminatory, offensive or sensitive. Complaints of this nature will be dealt with under the Council’s policies, e.g. Disciplinary, Equality and Diversity and behavioural standards in the workplace guidance.

## 5. Using social media for work purposes

- 5.1 The Council **does not** permit the use of personal social media accounts for work purposes. Employees who wish to communicate with persons whilst representing the Council in their professional capacity should do so by obtaining authorisation to set up or utilise an account appropriate to the business activity. This could potentially breach articles 7 and 8 of the Data Protection Act.
- 5.2 Employees should ensure that with any use of social media in their professional capacity that they must have formal authorisation to use social media on behalf of the Council and follow all set protocols. **All service areas wishing to use social media to communicate with the public must first gain authorisation from their respective Head of Service.** This can be done by completing the relevant business case form which can be found on the intranet. Once authorisation is obtained, the service must then contact the Marketing and Media in order to ensure all social media applications are consistent with the required policies. All new social media accounts must be registered with the corporate marketing and media team.
- 5.3 Any proposed use of unsupported or genre based social media will be considered subject to reviewing the security and suitability of the proposed service.

- 5.4 **You must ensure that all communications are compliant with the Welsh language standards (No.1) Regulations 2015** that are now applicable to all Council employees and communications made on the Council's behalf. All communications must be bilingual. In order to safeguard you and your department it is important that you note that **any failure to adhere to the standards set out in the regulations can result in a substantial fine of up to £5,000.00** which in the event of a breach will be the responsibility of the department from which the breach originates. The necessary guidelines and training on the standards of practice necessary to be compliant with the regulations will be supplied by the Marketing and Media Team.
- 5.5 All of the information, data and communications held on social media platforms and services in the name of the Council is subject to the Breaches of Security policy, which sets out the duties owed under the Data Protection Act. There is a duty to report any inadvertent / accidental disclosure of information in respect of the Act.

## 6. Monitoring Social Media

- 6.1 If a social media account is to be used to view or monitor another account, care must be taken to avoid inadvertently conducting covert online surveillance. Any such monitoring must be conducted in accordance with the Council's Covert Surveillance Policy and advice should be sought in advance from Legal Services.

## 7. Ensuring adequate safeguarding measures are in place

- 7.1 Current corporate safeguarding policies apply to any activity on social media and should be adhered to at all times.
- 7.2 If you will be using social media in a way that will potentially give you access to the personal information of under 18's or vulnerable adults, you must be DBS checked. You must not access any information pertaining to a vulnerable adult or minor under the age of 18, unless expressly required to do so as part of your role; if you are in any doubt, you should discuss any concerns or queries with your line manager.

## 8. Retaining professional integrity

- 8.1 For the Council's protection as well as your own always be mindful that it is important that you stay within the legal framework and be aware that libel, defamation, copyright, and data protection laws apply.
- 8.2 Privacy settings are frequently changed by social media providers and so you need to be aware of any changes to the settings which relax privacy.
- 8.3 Don't assume your information will be kept private.

- 8.4 Don't forget that social media tools are owned by external companies and data breaches are possible.
- 8.5 If in doubt, hold back and seek advice from the Marketing and Media Team. Always consider the content carefully and also be sensible about disclosing personal details about yourself as an employee of the Council.
- 8.6 When using social media tools to interact with any person in a professional capacity do not treat the tool as a confidential space for confidential or personal conversations. Always assume that anything you share on such tools are in the public domain given that such sites are often subject to attack and data theft from hackers.
- 8.7 The use of work e-mail to log in to social media should be cleared along with the business case for setting up social media accounts. When using a Council e-mail address (@Carmarthenshire.gov.uk) as a login for a Council social media account **never** use your current network password along with it as this creates significant security risks. Employees must not use their work e-mail for a personal social media account.
- 8.8 When using social media on behalf of the Council you must act in accordance with the standards set out in the officers code of conduct in relation to political neutrality (Part 5.4 – Paras 5.0-5.4).
- 8.9 If you are publishing pictures of people or quoting people or naming employees members you must make them aware that you are doing so and you must obtain the consent of people so pictured, named or quoted.

## 9. Monitor and Respond

- 9.1 Whilst social media can be used to broadcast information it is also a communication exchange and when creating public spaces it is important to monitor what people are sharing or placing on spaces controlled by the Council, the nature of social media carries with it the inherent risk associated with feedback / criticism in the public arena.
- 9.2 It is the service area's responsibility to manage their social media accounts. Daily monitoring is advised to ensure any comments which breach the Core values and principles of the Council posted by persons using any public forum for comment are removed.
- 9.3 You should advise any persons communicating with the Council via social media that any comments they make are subject to the core values of the Council and that any comment that breaches those values will be removed.

- 9.4 If it becomes necessary to remove offensive, defamatory or libelous comments from other users, inform the Marketing and Media Team, you should inform the user who made the comments of the reason for the removal after consultation with the Marketing and Media Team.
- 9.5 Should any comments be of a nature which are of a criminal nature they and the identity insofar as it is known should also be reported to the appropriate authorities.

## 10. Related Policies

- 10.1 In considering this policy, please refer to all of the policies, legislation and guidance relating to the management of data and information.
- Internet Usage and Monitoring Policy Version 2.0
  - Social Media Best Practice Guidelines
  - Part 5.4 – Officers Code of Conduct (Revised 14.06.2012)
  - Information Security Policy v4.1
  - Data Protection article 7 and 8.
  - Behavioural Standards in the Workplace Guidance
  - Equality and Diversity
  - Covert Surveillance Policy
  - Customer Complaints and Complaints Procedure
  - Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015
  - Close Personal Associations/ Relationships at Work Guidance
  - Breaches of Security Policy

## 11. Further Considerations

- 11.1 The Council will treat as serious any use of social media which does not accord with the principles and guidelines set out in this policy. Any incidents of such will be considered on their own merit and may be dealt with under the Council's disciplinary procedures.
- 11.2 Further advice and guidance on this policy can be gained from the Marketing and Media Team or Human Resources Advisory Team and from the Legal department in respect of the protection of children or vulnerable adults.

## 12. Appendices

- 12.1 Appendix 1 – Social Media Business Case