



## Chichester City Council

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Social Media is an important tool for all Councils, but it is not without its difficulties. Boundaries which exist in the 'real world' are easy to 'blur' in an online forum.
- 1.2. This Policy:
  - a Explains what we mean by the term 'social media'
  - b Sets out a framework of expected standards and behaviour both in terms of personal social media use and business use
  - c Sets out the implications if those standards are not met
- 1.3. For Officers, please note that this Policy does not form part of your contract with us.
- 1.4. The City Council reserves the right to amend or remove this Policy at any time.
- 1.5. This Policy applies to all Members and Officers of the City Council and anyone who could be identified as being associated with the Council. This may include, but is not limited to, contractors, agency workers, casual workers, interns, volunteers and members of the public who have been co-opted on to any of the City Council's Committees, Sub-Committees or Working Groups.

### 2. What is 'Social Media'?

- 2.1. 'Social media' includes online communications and applications through which communications, media and messages can be shared. The 'social' aspect refers to the fact that you are interacting and sharing with other people.
- 2.2. There are different types of social media. Examples include:
  - a Social networks: the most well-known form of social media, such as Facebook, LinkedIn and X (formerly Twitter).
  - b Media sharing networks: These are used for sharing photographs, videos and other forms of media, such as Instagram and Snapchat.
  - c Discussion forums: These are forums where particular topics of interest can be discussed, such as Reddit and Mumsnet.
  - d Consumer review networks: These are sites which allow you to leave reviews in relation to products, services and brands, such as TripAdvisor.
  - e Blogs: These are used for publishing and commenting on articles on different topics. Many businesses have their own blogs on their corporate web platforms, and many individuals have blogs chronicling things which they wish to share.

### 3. Personal use of Social Media

- 3.1. For Officers:
  - a You should keep personal use of social media to a minimum during working time. Further details in this regard can be found in the City Council's IT Equipment and Systems Acceptable Use Policy.
  - b Personal social media use should not negatively impact your productivity or your ability to meet deadlines and personal notifications must be switched off during the working day to avoid distraction of yourself and/or your colleagues.

- 3.2. There may be occasions when your actions on social media in a personal capacity impact your membership of or employment with the City Council. Even if you do not name the Council, people who know you and where you work may still make an association with the Council, or people might use 'jigsaw' identification (putting together information from more than one source) to discover your connection to the City Council. The City Council has the right to protect its legitimate business interests.
- 3.3. Accordingly, Members, Officers and others as defined in 1.5 above; are expected to follow these rules:
  - a You must not act inappropriately in your interactions on social media. This includes acting in a discriminatory manner, harassing others or being rude online.
  - b You must not make any derogatory statements about any other person or the Council.
  - c If, in a social media profile, you disclose your association with the City Council, then you should make sure that all postings maintain an appropriate professional style and content.
  - d You must make clear that any opinions given are your personal ones.
  - e You must not publish anything which may bring the City Council, or others associated with us, into disrepute.
  - f You must not publish anything which would be in breach of copyright or the rights of others.
  - g You must not add the details of business contacts you make through your City Council work to any of your personal social media accounts.
  - h The contact details of any business contacts you make while working for the City Council belong to the Council and must remain confidential. When your term of office ends or you leave your employment with the City Council, you must surrender this data and delete any copies you have, including any you have added to your social media accounts.
  - i You must not post to social media other than in your own name, and you must not pretend to be another person, real or non-existent.
- 3.4. Where your actions on social media have a direct or indirect impact on the City Council, the Council may take disciplinary action against you.

#### **4. Business use of social media**

- 4.1. It is important that if you are posting or commenting on social media as a representative of the City Council, you behave appropriately and in a way which upholds the Council's policies and values.
- 4.2. If your duties require you to post on the City Council's behalf on social media, you must seek approval for that communication from the Town Clerk. If you are contacted for comments about the City Council for publication, you should contact the Town Clerk for support. You should not respond without approval from the Town Clerk or an appropriate Manager in the Town Clerk's absence.
- 4.3. Any circumstance where you are posting as a proxy for the City Council (so that the post reads as if it came directly from the Council) or as the Council's representative, and any post or comment on a platform where your association with the Council is visible, is regarded by us as 'business use' of social media and the following rules apply:
  - a You should avoid slang.
  - b You should avoid inappropriate or rude language.

- c You should only comment on matters which fall within your expertise or knowledge.
- d You should not make any false or misleading statements.
- e You should check spelling and grammar before posting any content online.
- f You should only post on topics which are relevant to the Council.
- g You should never provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites. These references, positive and negative, can create legal liability for both you and the Council.
- h You should not post any confidential or otherwise sensitive information.
- i If your post is a posting as our representative, you should make sure that any post is approved in advance as per clause 4.2 of this policy.
- j You must not post any materials that could be deemed to be a breach of someone else's copyright.

## **5. Ownership of passwords and contacts<sup>1</sup>**

- 5.1. For Officers, if you have used social media (such as LinkedIn) to store or accrue business contacts in the course of your employment with the City Council, then those contacts belong to the Council. If the Council has asked you to do any of these things, whether during or after your employment, you must:
  - a Give the Council your access details to those social media accounts (i.e. your username, password, and any authentication details needed)
  - b Send the Council a list of all contacts accrued in the course of your employment with the Council, with all the details the Council reasonably ask for or irrevocably delete those contacts, without retaining any copies.
- 5.2. The City Council owns all passwords to its social media accounts. If you set up a social media account on the Council's behalf, or if you change a password to one of the Council's social media accounts, you must inform the Town Clerk and/or Council Services Support Manager in writing of the (new) access details. If you are set as the contact for two-factor authentication (for example, if a text is sent to your personal phone number to corroborate that you are authorised to sign into a social media account), you must cooperate with the Council to change those details if you are asked to do so.

## **6. Monitoring**

- 6.1. The City Council may monitor, intercept and review any social media activity carried out using the Council's IT and communications systems as permitted under the Council's Data Protection Policy and IT Equipment and Systems Acceptable Use Policy to monitor compliance with this policy.
- 6.2. The City Council may monitor, intercept and review social media accounts and posts if they are public. The Council may also review any content or post in a private or 'member only' forum or any deleted post in either a public or private forum which is brought to the Council's attention (for example, by the provision of screenshots).

## **7. Breaches of this Policy**

- 7.1. Breach of this Policy may result in disciplinary action being taken against you, up to and including dismissal.

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<sup>1</sup> Both of these requirements need to be reflected in employment contracts in order to be legally binding.

7.2. The Council may require you to remove social media postings which the Council believe to be inappropriate or otherwise in breach of this Policy. Failure to comply with any request made may result in disciplinary action being taken against you.

## **8. Useful links and contacts**

8.1. The following internal policies are referred to in this Policy and contain additional information and guidance [*amend as appropriate*]:

- a Staff Handbook - <https://chichestercity.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Staff-Handbook-V1-November-2024-website-links-added-compressed.pdf>
- b IT Equipment and Systems Acceptable Use Policy
- c Data Protection Policy and Privacy Statement - <https://chichestercity.gov.uk/terms-conditions>

8.2. The Town Clerk can be contacted at any time in relation to the matters detailed in this policy via [clerk@chichestercity.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@chichestercity.gov.uk)

8.3. Any suspicious emails or IT related contacts should be reported immediately. If you receive a suspicious email, please forward it directly to [administration@chichestercity.gov.uk](mailto:administration@chichestercity.gov.uk) for the attention of the Council Services and Support Manager.

## **9. Administration of the Computers, Email and Internet Policy**

9.1. The Town Clerk and Council Services and Support Manager are responsible for the administration of the City Council's devices, Email and Internet Policies. Should you have any feedback, please contact them direct.

**Date policy adopted:** 17 December 2025

**Minute reference:** COUNCIL2025/26