



TRING TOWN COUNCIL

Social Media Policy

1. Policy Statement

1.1 This policy is intended to help employees, volunteers and Members make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as blogs, social networking websites, forums, message boards or comments on web-articles such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn

1.2 This policy outlines the standards we require employees and volunteers to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which we monitor use of social media, and the action we will take in respect of breaches of this policy.

2. The scope of the policy

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

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

3. Responsibility for implementation of the policy

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

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

3.3 All employees, volunteers and Members should ensure that they take time to read and understand it. Any breaches in policy should be reported to the Clerk.

3.4 Any questions relating to the content or application of the policy should be directed to the Clerk

4. Using social media

4.1 Only the Clerk is permitted to post material on any social media website in the Council's name or on our behalf.

4.2 We recognise the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about our Council and our community. We also recognise the importance of employees, volunteers and Members joining in, and helping shape local government conversation and direction through interaction in social media.

4.3 Before using social media on any matter which might affect the interests of the Council all employees, volunteers and Members must:

a) Have read this policy

b) Employees and volunteers must have sought and gained prior written approval to do so from the Clerk

5. Rules for use of social media

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

- 5.1 Do not upload, post, or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.
- 5.2 Any employee, volunteer or Member who feels that they may be harassed or bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website, should inform the Clerk.
- 5.3 Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal, private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with the Clerk.
- 5.4 Do not upload, post, or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.
- 5.5 Before you include a link to a third party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit you to link to it.
- 5.6 When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.
- 5.7 Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the Council.
- 5.8 You are personally responsible for content you publish on social media tools
- 5.9 Do not escalate heated discussions; try to be conciliatory and respectful, and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misinterpretations
- 5.10 Do not discuss employees without their prior approval.
- 5.11 Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics which may be inflammatory e.g. religion and politics
- 5.12 Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and widely used by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact details.
- 5.13 Official Council profiles and pages must not be used for party political purposes or specific campaigning purposes, as the Council is not permitted to publish material which "in whole or part appears to affect public support for a political party".

6. Monitoring use of social media websites

- 6.1 Employees should be aware that any use of any social media website (whether or not used 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)
- 6.2 Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence, or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and the Council.
- 6.3 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 personal or professional capacity, will probably amount to gross misconduct:
 - a) Pornographic material
 - b) A false or defamatory statement about any person or organisation
 - c) Material which is offensive or obscene
 - d) Criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or any other material which may cause embarrassment to the Council, Members or employees
 - e) Confidential information about the Council or anyone else
 - f) Any other statement which is likely to create any liability, whether criminal or civil
 - g) Material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

h) Any such action will be addressed under the Disciplinary Procedure, and for employees may result in summary dismissal.

6.4 Where evidence of misuse is found the Council may undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with its Disciplinary Procedure. If necessary, such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.

6.5 If you notice any use of social media by other employees or volunteers in breach of this policy, you must report it to the Clerk.

7. Monitoring and review of this policy

7.1 The Clerk shall be responsible for reviewing this policy on a four year cycle, to ensure that it continues to meet legal requirements and reflects best practice. The policy may also be examined if a formal complaint is made, in order to identify any areas requiring improvement.

Policy adopted: 23rd January 2017 and last reviewed January 2022

Next Policy Review Date: January 2026