



Social Media Policy

Policy Identification:	
Policy type:	Council
Summary:	The intent of this policy is to provide clear guidance on the appropriate use of social media platforms and tools in order to enable and encourage its use by Council members, Council staff, volunteers and contractors for the purpose of conducting Council business.
Record number:	19/43337
Date of adoption or approval:	20 April 2012
Last review date:	16 October 2020
Next review date:	Once in each term of Council
Responsible department:	Corporate and Community Services
Responsible officer (s):	Chief Executive Officer and Director Corporate and Community Services
Review officer:	Personal Assistant to Director of Corporate and Community Services
Consultation required:	Team members of the Communication Strategy Team
Relevant references:	
Delegations:	
Legislation:	
Related policies:	Media Policy Electronic Communication Facilities Policy
Related procedures:	Appendix A – Response Guide

1. Purpose

Social media allows online communities with common interests to connect, share and consume information, thoughts and ideas.

The District Council of Loxton Waikerie (Council) recognises the opportunities that social media provides to engage in meaningful, two-way communication with the broader community. This can complement and enhance existing communication, customer service and consultation methods, and further improve access to, and delivery of, key services.

The Council also recognises the value of social media to the organisation provided through networking, recruitment, professional development, employee engagement, collaboration and innovation.

The intent of this policy is to provide clear guidance on the appropriate use of social media platforms and tools in order to enable and encourage its use by Council members, Council staff, volunteers and contractors for the purpose of conducting Council business.

The policy aims to:

- Promote effective and productive community engagement through social media
- Provide guidance about the appropriate use of social media tools at Council
- Reduce the likelihood of miscommunication or inappropriate communications
- Help Council manage new challenges associated with social media such as speed and immediacy, record keeping, privacy and security
- Provide clarity about roles and responsibilities in relation to use, approval and monitoring

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Council members, employees, contractors, agents and volunteers who purport to use social media on behalf of Council. This policy will also apply to agencies and individuals who provide services to Council and will be included in all relevant external supplier contracts.

The policy applies to all current and future social media tools and channels. That is, digital spaces where people comment, view, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content, such as:

- Blogs, forums, discussion and bulletin boards, instant messaging facilities and citizen journalism and news sites which facilitate public comment
- Microblogging sites (e.g. Twitter)
- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, Google+, Bebo, Friendster, LinkedIn)
- Podcasts, video podcasts, video and photo sharing sites (e.g. Flickr, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram)
- Online encyclopaedias (e.g. Wikipedia)
- Online collaboration platforms (e.g. Yammer, Wiki)
- Any other websites that allow individuals to use simple publishing tools or new technologies emerging from the digital environment.

As it is not possible to expressly refer to or list the all specific sites or kinds of social media activity, the absence of a reference does not limit the application of this policy.

This policy applies only to the use of social media for:

- the purpose of conducting Council business and where representing Council; and
- personal use where reference is made to Councillors, staff, policies and services, suppliers or other stakeholders or Council related issues.

Personal use of social media during work hours is prohibited.

2. Legislative and policy framework

Council members and staff are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and policies. A list of relevant legislation which may be used as a guide is included in Appendix A.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies and procedures of Council. Policies and guideline provisions which must be adhered to in relation to the use of social media include the following:

- District Council of Loxton Waikerie Electronic Communication Facilities Policy
- Code of Conduct for Council Members
- Code of Conduct for Council Employees
- District Council of Loxton Waikerie employment contracts
- District Council of Loxton Waikerie Caretaker Policy
- District Council of Loxton Waikerie Media Policy
- District Council of Loxton Waikerie Records Management Policy
- District Council of Loxton Waikerie Community Engagement Policy

3. Policy Statement

Council encourages the appropriate and professional use of social media to aid the efficient and effective conduct of Council business.

Social media is recognised as an important channel, used in conjunction with traditional methods, to communicate, listen to, engage and collaborate with the community and enhance the delivery of services.

At all times, use of social media by Council members and staff should be done in a professional manner, in accordance with relevant policies and legislation, and consistent with the values of Council.

3.1 Usage

Speak how you would like to be spoken to

- Be courteous, patient and respectful of others' opinions, including detractors
- Use your own voice, but be mindful of language and expression
- Don't make statements or forward, share or upload content that is malicious, defamatory or may negatively impact the reputation of another
- Be mindful of anti-discrimination laws and do not publish statements or information which may be discriminatory

(Refer to Appendix A for guidance on how to respond to social media comments.)

Stick to the facts

- Only comment about matters within your area of expertise
- Be accurate, constructive, helpful and informative, and correct any errors as soon as practicable
- Only publish content and statements that you know are true, clear and not likely to mislead or deceive
- If you make an error, be up front and correct it quickly

Keep your opinion, beliefs and political views separate from Council business

- Only publish content on Council's social media channels that is apolitical, in line with official Council positions and values, and free from personal opinions, beliefs and political views
- Council staff using private social media channels outside of work hours to comment about Council related matters should clearly identify their comments as their own personal opinions, be accurate and factual and not disparage Council, Councillors, employees or contractors etc
- Council members should use social media in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Generally, Council members should not express personal opinions on Council decisions or Council business nor be critical of the council. If it is not possible to separate official Council positions from personal opinions, Council members should consider using a formal disclaimer to separate interests

Stay within your level of authorisation

- Only use social media channels in the manner for which you have been authorised and do not commit Council to actions or undertakings
- Leave formal statements and announcements to the official spokespeople and if you are unsure, check with your supervisor
- Refer any media enquiries via social media or posts about potentially sensitive/political issues to the Director Corporate and Community Services for a response in line with Council's Media Policy

Be fair and transparent

- Be clear about your professional identity and any vested interests and refrain from covert, anonymous or deceitful representation including via a third party
- Encourage open, honest and transparent engagement and feedback by the online community
- Refrain from any behaviour which could be seen as biased, showing undue favour or in response to real or perceived compensation or reward

Maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy and property of others

- Only discuss publicly available information and maintain the confidentiality of internal discussions, confidential decisions of Council, and personal or private information about Councillors, employees or third parties
- Seek permission from anyone who appears in any photographs, video or other footage before sharing via any form of social media and if asked to remove materials do so as soon as practicable
- Only use or reproduce copyright material, or the intellectual property of others, including applications, sound recordings (speeches, songs), footage (video), graphics (graphs, charts and logos), images, artwork, photographs, publications or music if you have permission from the creator or owner

Be responsible, accessible and responsive

- Appropriately monitor any social media sites created and ensure they can be easily edited, improved or removed
- Specify the type of comments and feedback that will receive a response and clearly communicate a target response time. Refer to Attachment B for guidance on how to respond to social media comments
- Make it easy for audiences to reach Council via other methods by publishing Council's phone number, generic email, Facebook, Skype and Twitter accounts
- Ensure information on social media meets government web standards for accessibility and/or is available in another form where practical
- Do not use social media when inebriated, irritated, upset or tired
- Protect your personal privacy and guard against identity theft

Uphold acceptable content standards

Under no circumstances is the following content permitted on Council social media channels, and if found, formally report, record and then delete it immediately:

- Abusive, profane or sexual language
- Discriminatory material in relation to a person or group based on age, colour, creed, disability, family status, gender identity, nationality, marital status, parental status, political opinion/affiliation, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, race or social origin, religious beliefs/activity, responsibilities, sex or sexual orientation
- Illegal material or materials designed to encourage law breaking
- Materials that could compromise Council, employee or system safety
- Materials which would breach applicable laws (defamation, privacy, trade practices, copyright, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks)
- Confidential information about Council or third parties
- Material that would offend contemporary standards of taste and decency
- Material which would bring the Council into disrepute

- Personal details or references to Council members, Council staff or third parties, which may be inconsistent with the national Privacy Principles
- Spam, meaning the distribution of unsolicited bulk electronic messages
- Statements which may be considered to be bullying or harassment

If you have any doubt about applying the provisions of this policy, check with the Director Corporate and Community Services before using social media to communicate. Depending upon the nature of the issue and potential risk, it may also be appropriate to consider seeking legal advice.

3.2 Management

Approval

The establishment of new social media sites must be approved by Director Corporate and Community Services. Approval of new social media sites should consider the identified business objective, audience, proposed use in line with this policy, resourcing requirements and ensure alignment with Council's branding and style guidelines.

Security

To protect from unauthorised use of Council's social media channels, login information should be kept secure and changed at regular intervals:

- Choose passwords that combine upper and lower case letters and numbers
- Store login information in a secure location and the Corporate and Community Services department will maintain a centralised list of all Council's social media with appropriate access restrictions
- Change passwords every six months and when an employee with access to a Council social media channel leaves the organisation

Monitoring

Council's social media channels should be regularly monitored and maintained to ensure appropriate use. Where necessary keep formal records of social media activity in line with Council's Records Management Policy.

Council and non-Council social media channels should be monitored for information, research and insight into issues circulating in the community and/or matters that impact on the municipality, its operations or reputation.

Evaluation and continuous improvement

Use of Council's social media channels should be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure they are achieving business objectives and to seek opportunities for further improvement. This includes review of qualitative (feedback, comments) and quantitative data (likes, reach, audience make-up, number of comments, click throughs to Council websites etc).

4. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Council members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek advice from the Chief Executive Officer on using social media • Seek approval for Council branding of social media • Register social media account/tools/site with the Corporate and Community Services department • Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy • Seek training and development for using social media • Seek advice from the Corporate and Community Services department if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy
Staff and contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek approval from your manager for business strategy incorporating social media • Seek advice from the Chief Executive Officer and / or Director Corporate and Community Services on using social media and developing a communications plan to support business strategy • Seek approval for Council branding of social media • Register social media account/tools/site with the Corporate and Community Services department • Seek training and development for using social media • Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy • Maintain records of email addresses, comments, 'friends', followers and printed copies or electronic 'screen grabs' when using externally hosted sites to the extent practicable • Seek advice from the Chief Executive Officer and / or the Director Corporate and Community Services if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy • Ensure contractors are provided with a copy of this policy • Familiarise yourself with the End User Licence Agreements of any external social media tools being used
Directors/ Managers/ Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve business strategy incorporating use of social media • Ensure staff obtain authorisation from the Chief Executive Officer or the Director Corporate and Community Services on their planned use of social media • Ensure contractors are provided with a copy of the social media policy • Ensure the demands of moderating and responding to user comments can be adequately resourced • Offer training for staff using social media • Ensure regular review and evaluation of social media channels in line with business objectives and for the purpose of continuous improvement

Corporate and Community Services Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate secure access to support delivery of Council business via social media • Regularly back up and archive internally hosted social media sites
Chief Executive Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorise use of social media tools for conducting Council business • Authorise the removing, deleting and banning of users/comments on council social media pages. This will apply when a user: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is persistently commenting inappropriately • continuously posts incorrect or inaccurate information • slanders an individual or business • posts comments provoking inappropriate discussion on a Council post
Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide advice and assist with the development of communication plans using social media • Approve the design and branding of social media • Educate Councillors, staff and contractors about this policy and their responsibilities when using social media • Advise appropriate precautions (e.g. disclaimers) • Maintain a register of social media being used for conducting Council business including records of the business case for using social • Media, its strategic imperative, the intended administrator, URL, login, password and audience • Assist staff to retain some record explaining the context or purpose of social media, and a sample of posts where it is impractical to retain large volumes of screen grabs • Monitor social media accounts/tools/sites registered for conducting Council business • Monitor social media for references to Council • Regularly conduct qualitative and quantitative review and evaluation of social media channels and advise on best practice • Seek legal advice as appropriate where an issue is likely to be contentious or may create legal risk for Council

5. Adherence to policy

Council reserves the right, for legal compliance purposes, to monitor social media usage on its systems without advance notice and consistent with any applicable state, federal or international laws.

Council will actively monitor social media for relevant contributions that impact on the Council, its operations and reputation, and remove, where possible, content that violates this policy or any associated policies.

This policy will be published and promoted to Council members, staff, volunteers and contractors.

Any staff members found breaching this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, performance management and/or review. Serious breaches may result in suspension or termination of employment or association in accordance with council policies. Any content that breaches the policy guidelines will be recorded and kept on personnel records.

For Council members, breaching this policy may result in a code of conduct complaint.

If Council members or staff become aware of any comments that breach these guidelines they should report them to the Director of Corporate and Community Services and include a link or reference to the offending material.

6. References – relevant legislation

Council members and staff are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and policies.

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to, the following:

- Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)
- Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 (SA)
- Defamation Act 2005 (SA)
- Fair Trading Act 1997 (SA)
- Fair Work Act 1994 (SA)
- Freedom of Information Act 1991 (SA)
- Local Government Act 1999 (SA)
- Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 (SA)
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
- Spam Act 2003 (Cth)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- State Records Act 1997 (SA)
- Civil Liability Act 1936 (SA)

7. Availability

This policy will be available for inspection at the Council offices at Loxton or Waikerie during ordinary business hours at no charge.

Copies of this policy will also be available from Councils website www.loxtonwaikerie.sa.gov.au or postal copies may be obtained from the Council Office free of charge.

8. Document history and version control

Date	Version	Authorisation - Council/ Committee/ Senior Management Team	Amendment Details
20/04/2012	1.0	Council meeting of 20 April 2012	First version
15/02/2013	1.0	Council meeting of 15 February 2013	No changes noted
17/04/2015	1.0	Council meeting of 17 April 2015	No changes noted
17/11/2017	1.2	Council meeting of 17 November 2017	Extension of the review period and some minor changes in wording (with intent remaining the same) as per the LGA model Social Media Policy template (2016), with the addition of the <i>social media response guide</i> , reference to the <i>Electronic Communication Facilities Policy</i> and document history and version control protocols.
16/10/2020	1.3	Council meeting of 16 October 2020	Minor grammar and formatting changes. Added to CEO's authorisation of removing, deleting and banning comments or users.

Appendix A – Response Guide

The following flow chart has been designed as a guide for deciding what posts should be responded to on Council social media channels and in what manner.

