



## **GRAIG COMMUNITY COUNCIL** **Social Media Policy**

### **Policy statement**

**This policy is intended to help Community Councillors and Community Council staff to make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as emails, blogs, wikis, social networking websites, podcasts, forums, message boards or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other relevant social media websites and publications, and also as a guide for the Graig Community Council official website.**

**The Community Council (referred to in this document as the Council) will encourage the use of social media for the purposes of:**

1. Providing and exchanging information about services
2. Supporting local democracy
3. Gathering citizen insights and managing citizen relationships
4. Promoting cultural events or tourism for the area
5. Supporting community cohesion, neighbourliness and resilience
6. Creating internal communications, learning and development

This policy outlines the standards the Council requires its Councillors and staff to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which the Council will monitor the use of social media and the action to be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.

This policy supplements and should be read in conjunction with all other policies and procedures adopted by the Council, such as the Equal Opportunities Policy, Members Code of Conduct, Meeting Rules and Etiquette Policy and such like.

This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

### **Who is covered by this policy:**

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels within the Council, including all elected and co-opted Councillors and the Clerk to the Council. Serious breaches of this policy by employees may be dealt with under the Employee Disciplinary Procedure. The Council may take disciplinary action in respect of unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually orientated or racially offensive comments by the employee. Behaviour required by the Members' Code of Conduct shall apply to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication.

### **Rules for using social media:**

- Staff and Councillors must not allow their interaction on any websites, blogs or publications to damage their working relationships with others. They must not make any derogatory, discriminatory, defamatory or offensive comments about other staff, Councillors, the Council or about the people, businesses and agencies that the Council works with and serves.
- Posts must not contain anyone's personal information.
- If staff or Councillors blog or tweet personally and not in their role as a Councillor, they must not act, claim to act or give the impression that they are acting as a representative of the Council. They should not include web links to official Council websites as this may give or reinforce the impression that they are representing the Council.
- All staff and Councillors must ensure that they use Council facilities appropriately. If using a Council-provided website, blog site or social networking area, any posts made will be viewed as made in an official capacity. Do not use Council facilities for personal or political blogs, tweets, messages or publications.
- The Council will appoint nominated administrators to maintain and update the Council website and social media. The website will be used to:-
  - Post notices and minutes of meetings
  - Advertise events and activities
  - Post good news stories



Link to appropriate websites or press page if those sites meet the Council's expectations of conduct  
Advertise vacancies

Retweet or 'share' information from partners i.e. Police, library, City Council etc.

Announce new information appropriate to the Council

Post of share information promoting bodies for community benefit such as schools, Scouts, sports clubs and community groups

Post other items as the Council see fit

Facebook and/or Twitter etc. may be used to support the website and its information as above

- Staff and individual Councillors are responsible for what they post. They are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published e-mail address which is used for Council business. Both staff and Councillors are strongly advised to have separate Council and personal email addresses.
- All social media sites in use may be checked at any time to ensure that the security settings are in place.

### **When participating in online communication, staff and councillors must:**

- Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent
- Always disclose their identity and affiliation to the Council
- Never make false or misleading statements
- Not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment. They must protect the good reputation of the Council
- Be mindful of the information posted on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council
- Keep the tone of comments respectful and informative, never condescending or 'loud'. Use sentence case format, not capital letters, do not write in red to emphasise points
- Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks. Language that may be deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief should not be published on any social media site
- Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications
- Do not post comments that you would not be prepared to make in writing or face to face
- Never name an individual third party unless you have written permission to do so
- Seek permission to publish original photographs or video from the persons or organisations in the video or photographs before they are uploaded. You must check that there is parental permission before photos of children are used
- Respect the privacy of other Councillors, staff and residents
- Never post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations such as libel and copyright
- Spell and grammar check everything

### **At any meeting of the Council or any of its Committees**

- Only use laptops and tablets if they are required to display documents relevant to the meeting and for Council business only.
- Residents and Councillors should be aware that not all communication through social media requires a response, although an acknowledgement should be made if appropriate.
- If a matter that is raised in any form of social media needs further consideration by the Council it may be raised at either the open forum or as full agenda item for consideration by a quorum of Councillors. Again the 'poster' shall be informed via the page or direct message that this is the case and invited to contact the Clerk direct. Any response agreed by the Council will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- Reports of any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should be reported to the Clerk for referral to Council and further if required.

This Policy will be reviewed as and when necessary, but as a minimum every 3 years.