

STAPLEFORD TOWN COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles of acceptable use of Social Media by Stapleford Town Council employees, Councillors, representatives and volunteers.

The Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and all Councillors are expected to comply with the policy at all times in order to protect the reputation, privacy, confidentiality and interests of the Council, its services, employees, partners and community.

The Council has adopted a Code of Conduct which is binding on all members. If you use Social Media in your official capacity as a Councillor, you should always be mindful of the Code, and of the seven Nolan principles applicable to holding public office – selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Behaviour required by the Code applies equally to online activity and Councillors should bear in mind that inappropriate conduct can still attract adverse publicity for the Council even where the Code does not apply. Online content should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate. Councillors must be aware that their public profile means that it is more likely that they will be seen as acting in an official capacity when blogging or networking. When communicating in a 'private group' it should be ensured that the Council would be content with the statement should it be made public – it must be remembered that communications on the internet are permanent and not always secure so, essentially, public.

All employees, volunteers and Councillors should ensure that they take the time to read and understand this policy. You are personally responsible for the content that you publish. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the Clerk.

What is Social Media?

'Social media' is the term commonly given to websites and online tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. This interaction may be through computers, mobile phones and tablet technology, but may extend in the future.

Examples of social media websites include:

Social networking – (eg. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat)

Professional networking (e.g. LinkedIn)

Video sharing – (eg. YouTube)

Blogs (eg. Wordpress)

Micro-blogging (eg. Twitter)

Message boards (eg. BBC Messageboard)
Wikis (eg. Wikipedia)

General Rules of Use

The core reason for the Council to hold social media accounts is to publish information about the work of Stapleford Town Council to a wider audience and encourage interaction from members of the community that we would not normally reach through traditional communication methods.

However, Councillors and employees will also have their own personal accounts where they might talk about the Council or the community and groups/activities occurring.

Councillors and employees must not allow their interaction on any websites or social media applications to damage their working relationship with others.

By following these rules Councillors and employees will reduce the likelihood of bringing the Council into disrepute:

- Do not make any derogatory, discriminatory, defamatory, abusive, obscene or offensive comments.
- Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent.
- Always disclose your identity and affiliation to the Council.
- Never make false or misleading statements.
- Do not present yourself in a way that might cause embarrassment. You must protect and help to build 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 or 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 videos from the persons or organisations in the video or photograph 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.
- Avoid entering into online debates or arguments about the Council's work.

- Social Media must not be used in the recruitment process for employees or new councillors - other than for the sole purpose of placing vacancy advertisements - as this could lead to potential discrimination and privacy actions, as well as breach of data protection issues.

Approved Council Social Media

- Town Council website
- Facebook page
- Twitter account
- Instagram

Users of Council Social Media

In accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, the Town Clerk is the Council's nominated Press Officer with the authority to issue official press releases. No other person has the authority to issue public statements on behalf of the Council unless an official delegation from the Clerk is enacted.

The Clerk acts as the 'webmaster' and moderator of content published on the Council's pages and may remove, or instruct staff to remove, any content deemed inappropriate without notice or comment.

The website may 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 provided that their terms and conditions of that website permit it
- Advertise vacancies
- 'share' information from partners i. e. Police, Library, borough council, etc. if permitted to do so.
- Announce new information appropriate to the Council.
- Post or 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, etc, may be used to support the website and its information as above.

Date of policy: August 2020

Approving committee:

Date of committee meeting:

Policy version reference:

Supersedes: [Name of old policy and reference]

Policy effective from:

Date for next review: