



# **COLNE TOWN COUNCIL**

## **Social Media & Communications Policy**

**Produced by Nathan Cutler, March 2021**

**Approved by Full Council:**

**Review Date:**

# **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This Policy sets out to ensure the effective use of social media to respect others and always remain professional.
- 1.2 To advise Councillors to make appropriate decisions about their communication when using emails, Facebook, Twitter, and other media platforms.
- 1.3 This Policy outlines the standards that Colne Town Council requires all Members to observe when using social media in line with the Council's Code of Conduct.
- 1.4 This Policy does not form part of any Contract of Employment and it may be amended at any time.

# **2 Who does this Policy affect?**

- 2.1 This Policy covers all individuals working at all levels within Colne Town Council, including all elected and co-opted Councillors, volunteers and staff.

# **3 Key objectives**

- 3.1 Colne Town Council encourages the use of social media to respond to the following key objectives which will be periodically reviewed: -
  - To promote and create awareness of what the Council does and its activities.
  - To respect people and their opinions.
  - To create awareness of issues occurring within Colne.
  - To answer questions on services that Colne Town Council offer and answer them accurately and effectively.
  - To clarify or correct any unclear or incorrect statements or views such as incorrect news being published on media platforms about one of the Council Services.
  - To provide information, advice, and guidance (particularly in emergency situations).
  - To promote the image of a human and approachable Council.

## **4 Scope of this Policy**

- 4.1 Colne Town Council has an overall responsibility for the effective operation of this Policy. All Members are expected to always comply with this Policy to protect the reputation, privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the Council, its services, employees, partners, and community.
- 4.2 The 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. Members must be aware that their online profile as a Councillor means the more likely it is, they will be seen as acting in an official capacity when using all media platforms. Members must also know that online content should be objective, non-biased, informative, and accurate.
- 4.3 All employees, volunteers and Councillors must take the time to read and understand this Policy as they are personally responsible for the content they post on social media and any questions regarding the Policy should be directed to the Town Clerk.

## **5 Using social media**

- 5.1 Members must not allow their interaction on any web platform to damage their working relationships with others.
- Members must not make any derogatory, discriminatory, defamatory, abusive, or offensive comments.
  - Members must be responsible and respectful for the content they post on social media.
  - Members must never make false or misleading statements or comments which may affect the reputation of Colne Town Council.
  - Members must respect the privacy of other Councillors, staff, or volunteers.
  - Members must refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks. Language that may be deemed as offensive relating to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, or religion.
  - Members must never disclose sensitive, private, or confidential information and never publish anyone else's contact details without consent.
- 5.2 Members must always use their Council provided email address for anything relating to the Town Council.
- The Council also recommends that Councillors have a personal email for non-council related activity, to keep everything separate.
  - The freedom of information act gives the Town Clerk consent to ask for access to Council emails.
- 5.3 Members must ensure all content is disability friendly using the Council branded font (Calibri) and check that the grammar is correct in social media posts/emails.
- 5.4 All social media and press communications must be directed to Council Officers before being released to the public.
- 5.5 Members must only contact other Members on social media using work social media profiles/email address for anything relating to the Council.

- 5.6 Officers must set up a work social media profile for council related activity, to ensure anything Council related is kept separate from their personal profiles.
- 5.7 Members must give a minimum of 48 hours' notice to the publish time/date for any social media posts being published to Colne Town Council social media, within office hours.
- 5.8 Colne Town Council email accounts are monitored in office working hours and any emails should be responded to within 5 working days.
- 5.9 Members must not post any offensive, threatening or abusive comments/behaviour on social media, regardless of whether this on a Council related profile or personal profile.
  - Members will be known throughout the town and posting any posts/comments on social media which may be deemed as inappropriate, may have an impact on the brand image and reputation of the Council.

## **6. Monitoring the use of social media**

- 6.1 You should be aware that any use of social media may be monitored and where the Policy is not being complied with then action may be taken.
- 6.2 Misusing social media can run the risk of legal liability against you and Colne Town Council.
- 6.3 Reports of any concerns regarding content placed on social media should be reported to the Town Clerk for referral to the Council as required.