



# PENRYN TOWN COUNCIL

## Social Media Policy

### Introduction

The aim of this Policy is to set out a Code of Practice to provide guidance to Penryn Town Councillors and officers in the use of online communications, collectively referred to as social media. Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet. The policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):

- Town Council website
- Facebook, Myspace and other social networking sites
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites
- Youtube and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- Bloggs and discussion forums
- Town Council emails

The principles of the Policy apply to Town Councillors and officers of the Council. It is also intended for guidance for others communicating with the Town Council. The policy sits alongside relevant existing policies which need to be taken into consideration.

The use of social media is not to replace existing forms of communication. The website and other forms of social media will be used to enhance communication. Therefore existing means of communication should continue with social media being an additional option.

Aspects of the Members' Code of Conduct apply to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication. Online content should be objective, balanced, informative and accurate. What is written on the web is permanent.

In the main, Councillors have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failures to comply with the law may have more serious consequences. There are some additional duties around using websites for electoral campaigning and extra care

needs to be taken when writing on planning matters where Councillors should avoid publishing anything that might suggest they do not have an open mind about a matter they may be involved in determining.

## **Policy Statement**

1. The Town Clerk will be responsible for posting and monitoring of the content ensuring it complies with the Social Media Policy. The Town Clerk will have authority to remove any posts made by third parties from the Council's social media pages which are deemed to be of a defamatory or libellous nature. Such posts may also be reported to the host website.
2. The Town Clerk will maintain and update the Town Council website.
3. The social media may be used to:
  - Post minutes and dates of meetings
  - Advertise events and activities
  - Good news stories linked website or press page
  - Vacancies
  - Retweeting or 'share' information from partners
  - Announcing new information
  - Post or share information from other Parish related community groups, clubs, associations, and bodies
  - Refer resident queries to the Clerk and/or Councillors
4. Facebook will be used to support the website information above.
5. Emails will be used to distribute information on Council business.
6. Individual Town Councillors are responsible for what they post. Councillors are personally responsible for any online activity conducted via their published email address which is used for Council business. Councillors are strongly advised to have separate Council and personal email addresses.
7. All social media sites in use should be checked and updated on a regular basis and security settings must be in place.

## **Guidance for Town Councillors and other contributors**

8. When participating in any online communication:
  - (a) Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent.

- (b) Always disclose your identity and, where appropriate, affiliation to the Town Council. Never make false or misleading statements.
  - (c) Councillors should not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment. All Councillors need to be mindful of the information they post on sites and ensure that personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council; or bringing the Council into disrepute; or contrary to the Council's Code of Conduct or any other Policies.
  - (d) Keep the tone of your comments respectful and informative, never condescending or 'loud'. Use sentence case format, not capital letters, or writing in red to emphasise points.
  - (e) 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.
  - (f) Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications.
  - (g) Never use an individual's name unless you have written permission to do so.
  - (h) Permission to publish photographs or videos on social media sites should be sought from the persons or organisations in the video or photograph before being uploaded.
5. Respect the privacy of other Councillors and residents.
  6. Do not post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate laws or regulations.
  7. Residents and Councillors should note that not all communication requires an response. Questions will be responded to as soon as is practically possible, but comments will only be responded to where there is a need for clarification of a point raised. Some communication from residents and other third parties may be required to be discussed at a Town Council meeting. When this is necessary the item will be placed on the next available agenda. Any response will then be included in the minutes of the meeting.
  8. The Town Clerk shall remove any negative posts which may contain personal and inflammatory remarks, libellous or defamatory information without further comment or notification.
  9. Councillors or residents who have any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should report them to the Town Clerk. Misuse of such sites in a manner that is contrary to this and other policies could result in action being taken.
  10. The Policy will be reviewed annually.