



Queen's Park Community Council

Social Media Policy

This policy provides guidance to councillors, officers and others who engage with the council using online communications, collectively referred to as social media. Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet. This policy covers all forms of social media and social networking sites which include (but are not limited to):

- Council Website
- Facebook and other social networking sites
- Twitter and other micro blogging sites
- YouTube and other video clips and podcast sites
- LinkedIn
- Blogs and discussion forums
- Email.

The policy accompanies existing policies that need to be taken into account, including the Press and Media Policy, the current Code of Conduct and the Data Privacy Notice.

1. Councillors and officers must ensure that the use of social media will not adversely affect the Council or its business, nor be damaging to the Council's reputation and credibility or otherwise violate any Council policies. Councillors and officers are responsible for what they post in a council and personal capacity. Individual Councillors are fully entitled to establish and maintain their own social media accounts but they should ensure that they comply with this policy and ensure the 'personal view' disclaimer is used.
2. Councillors and officers have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failure to comply with the law may have more serious consequences.
3. Social media may be used for, but not limited to, the following:
 - publish agendas, minutes and reports; and announce dates of meetings
 - advertise events and activities
 - publish news stories linked to the website
 - announce vacancies or volunteering opportunities

- share information from partner agencies such as the principal authority, police, library, health etc. or from other related community groups such as schools, sports clubs, community groups and charities
 - refer resident enquiries to the officers or to all other councillors.
4. When using social media (including email) councillors and officers must be mindful of the information they post in both a personal and council capacity and keep the tone of any comments respectful and informative.
5. Online content should be accurate, objective, balanced and informative. Councillors and officers must take account of the Council's [Data Privacy Notice](#) and shall not:
- hide their identity using false names or pseudonyms
 - present personal opinions as that of the council
 - present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment to the council
 - post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the council
 - post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks
 - engage in personal attacks or hostile confrontations
 - use an individual's name unless given written permission to do so
 - publish photographs or videos of minors without parental permission
 - post any information that infringes the copyright of others
 - post any information that may be deemed libellous
 - post online activity that constitutes bullying or harassment
 - bring the council into disrepute, including through content posted in a personal capacity
 - post offensive language relating to ethnicity, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief
 - conduct any online activity that violates laws or regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence.
6. Publishing false statements about a person which is damaging to their reputation is libel and can result in a court action and fine for damages. Posting copyright content on social media sites is an offence: breach of copyright can result in an award of damages against you. Publishing personal data of individuals without permission is a breach of data protection legislation. Publication of obscene material is a criminal offence and is subject to a custodial sentence.
7. Councillors' views posted in any capacity in advance of matters to be debated by the council at a council or committee meeting may constitute Pre-disposition, Pre-determination or Bias and may require the individual to declare an interest at Council meetings.

8. Anyone with concerns regarding content on social media that may be illegal or for instance denigrates the council, its councillors or officers, residents or local organisations should report those concerns to the Chief Officer urgently.
9. The Council has appointed the Community Development Officer as moderator of council social media output with responsibility for posting and monitoring content. The moderator will have authority to remove any posts made by third parties from council social media pages which are deemed to be of a defamatory or libellous nature.

Adopted: January 2019

Minute ref: 127-18/19