

ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 12th JANUARY 2021

Agenda item 7 : Report of the Communications, Marketing and Events Officer

APPENDIX A

Introduction

This document sets out the Abingdon Town Council policy on personal use of social media. This policy applies to what is written/posted/streamed on social media sites by staff in a personal capacity which relates to their work.

The intention of this policy is to provide individuals with clear guidelines on what is and what is not considered to be appropriate personal use of social media, safeguarding the reputations of individuals and the organisation.

Definition of Social Media

The term 'social media' is used to describe on-line technologies and practices that are used to share information, knowledge, and opinions. Social media as a term includes social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, however this list is not exhaustive.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Abingdon Town Council whether full time or part time, whether on permanent contracts, or temporary. The policy also applies to Abingdon Town Council official volunteers.

This policy relates to the personal use of social media whether during work hours or outside of work and where there is a significant connection with the employee's work reputation, the organisations reputation and where colleagues are referred to.

Roles and Responsibilities

Abingdon Town Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure the effective governance of this policy (i.e. making sure that employees are aware of this policy and their obligations relating to personal use of social media). If unclear, employees should seek advice from their supervisor/line manager.

Employee responsibilities when at work

All Abingdon Town Council IT systems and services are provided as business tools. Employees who have authorised access to the internet at work are allowed reasonable personal use during authorised breaks (e.g. lunch breaks) and only where it does not impact on other business users.

Personal Use of Social Media

Employee responsibilities when not at work

All employees are responsible for any information they make available on-line whether this was posted during work hours, during breaks or when not at work. The Town Council considers employees to be responsible and accountable for information contained on their social networking page or blog. Employees need to be aware of what is posted/uploaded to sites they control and that they would be expected to manage any inappropriate material responsibly.

Employees therefore must ensure that when engaging in social media activity they abide by the following standards:

Employees must not :

- Send information, forward e-mails or send images on-line about Abingdon Town Council, its services, facilities or staff, which are confidential, defamatory, discriminatory, harassing, illegal, threatening, intimidating or which may incite hatred (e.g. Sectarianism/racism/homophobia).
- Direct defamatory, threatening, or intimidating comments on-line towards other Abingdon Town Council employees.
- Send or post images/photos of staff, services users or employees in the workplace, that would not otherwise be considered to be a public place, unless the express authority of the subject has been secured and that consent is based upon a full understanding of how the image will be used.
- Employees must however be cautious about discussing work-related issues and complaints in a manner which could cause reputational damage to individuals, their own reputation or that of the Town Council as their employer. Legitimate concerns should always be addressed through the appropriate channels e.g. Raised with their line manager.

Employees are advised:

- That if they disclose the name of the Town Council as their employer, they should make it clear when publishing their opinions on-line, that these are their own personal views and that they do not represent the views of The Town Council.

Policy Review and Monitoring

Following an initial six monthly review to ensure its effective introduction, the policy will be subject to review on a yearly basis unless the introduction of any new or amended relevant legislation or changes to the security structure of any social networking site warrants earlier review.