



STURMINSTER NEWTON TOWN COUNCIL

Social Media Policy

Adopted on: 6th April 2015

Review date:

Introduction

In the interests of accountability and openness, the Town Council may from time to time authorise the use of social media to give out information either relating to the Town Council or relevant to its functions. This policy document sets out the rules and principles to be applied whenever such use of social media is authorised.

This policy does not affect members' duties under the Council's Code of Conduct or the Ten General Principles of Public Life. Council employees also remain bound by their terms of employment including relevant policies in the Council's Staff Handbook.

Principles

1. No account with any digital social media provider or platform shall be opened in the name or on behalf of the Council save as expressly authorised by resolution of the Council.
2. Any account with any digital social media provider or platform opened in the name or on behalf of the Council shall:
 - be administered by the Town Clerk and such additional Council employees as the Town Clerk shall appoint only; and
 - be configured, so far as practicable, to preclude the posting of items or comments on items and the tagging of images by any person other than the Town Clerk and such additional Council employees as the Town Clerk shall appoint;
3. Posts to or comments upon social media made by or on behalf of the Council should:
 - relate exclusively to the functions, events, activities or proceedings of the Council or other matters of civic or public interest of particular relevance in the civil parish of Sturminster Newton;
 - reflect the desire of members to inform the public rather than to comment upon or justify policy positions or decisions or promote the interests of the Council or councillors; and
 - be expressed in polite but neutral terms, using plain English and avoid emotive or offensive language.
4. Any Council employee using social media on behalf of the Council must comply with the "Dorset councils online social policy" (as attached) insofar as it is relevant to the use of social media by or on behalf of the Council.

Approved: 4th June 2015

1 Dorset Councils online Social Policy

Blogs and social media offer exciting and innovative ways for our company's business to thrive. Participating in them can be a good way to expand and elevate the company's business presence. Dorset For You has decided that you have the necessary professionalism, industry knowledge and experience to act as our representative in the social media arena, subject to the terms of these guidelines. Please note- the council, refers to the Dorset council you are employed by.

2 Speak knowledgeably

Make sure that your online postings and communications reflect your level of expertise, and that you limit your comments to your area of knowledge. Before posting content, take the time to review the context and what others have said, to be sure you are contributing in an appropriate way. Consider linking to colleagues' postings to build on and maximise our overall online presence.

3 Be engaging and interactive

Write in the first person and, to the extent you feel comfortable in doing so, share information about yourself that others would find interesting in order to increase the appeal of your postings. If you are blogging about the council, identify your connection with the council and your role here. Try to stimulate interest in the work that you are doing and invite a dialogue so that you can learn from others doing similar or related things.

4 Add value

Consider the value of your contribution before you post. If what you are posting helps others in the online community to solve a problem, including your peers or our customers, you are adding value. Equally, if your contribution enhances the sense of community surrounding the council, or improves the image of our company, products or services, it is adding value.

5 Respond to your mistakes quickly

If you post something in error, act quickly to correct it. Your credibility is judged by your accuracy and your willingness to recognise and fix your mistakes. If you modify an earlier post in a blog, be upfront about doing so.

6 Don't be argumentative

Engaging in arguments and inflammatory debates can tarnish your credibility and reputation, and by association that of the council. If you choose to disagree with fellow bloggers, do so respectfully and objectively. If you speak negatively about a competitor's business in any way, do not disparage the competitor beyond stating the facts to make your point. Be respectful to all others in the online community.

7 Be respectful

Never post anything that might be offensive to others, such as sexual comments or racial slurs. Remember that talk of religion, culture or politics can also easily offend others.

8 Comply with our policies

If your post would contravene any of the councils policies in another forum, it will also do so in an online forum. Do not disclose confidential or proprietary council information, harass or discriminate against fellow employees, defame or disparage the council or fellow employees, or contravene any other council policy by your blogging. Do not use social media in a false or misleading way, for example, by claiming to be someone other than yourself or by creating an artificial 'buzz' around our business, products or shares.

9 Protect our customers, suppliers, business associates and investors

Do not cite or refer to our customers, vendors, business associates or investors, identify them by name or reveal any confidential information related to them without getting their explicit (written) permission in advance. Also, do not discuss or conduct business with a customer, supplier, business associate or investor in an online forum.

10 Do not comment on our business performance or plans

Disclosing or commenting on the councils confidential business information is absolutely prohibited, whether in relation to sales, customer lists, financials, business or marketing plans, performance or prospects. Do not comment in any way on rumours about these. If asked directly, simply say 'no comment'.

11 Respect and comply with the terms of the sites you visit

Review the terms of use of all social media sites you visit and ensure your use complies with them. Pay particular attention to terms relating to: Prohibitions or restrictions on the use of the site, such as those relating to advertising, marketing and promotions or other commercial purposes; for example, Facebook's Statement of Rights and Responsibilities (its terms of use) prohibits businesses from administering promotions through Facebook without Facebook's prior written consent. Ownership of intellectual property used on the site, or information collected or generated through use of it (for example, any of the company's copyright material and trade marks that might be posted on the site, or customer information that the company collects through the site). Requirements for licences allowing the site owner and other third parties to use the company's trade marks or other intellectual property. Rights and responsibilities of the site owner and users relating to privacy.

12 Consequences of failure to observe these guidelines

Failure to follow these guidelines, particularly in a way that could expose the council to liability, will be subject to appropriate disciplinary procedures, and may in extremely serious cases result in termination of employment. If you are unsure whether your planned actions might breach any of these guidelines, speak to your supervisor.

13 Further information

If you have any questions about social media, these guidelines, please contact Susannah Pike in the webteam: s.pike@dorsetforyou.com