Social Media & Networking Policy

PURPOSE

This policy is provided so that users are aware of the Council's stance and their personal responsibilities for the appropriate use of social media facilities they may access.

Within the policy scope are the uses of both the intranet and other external websites and online blogging facilities. This policy is necessary since many employees and volunteers enjoy sharing their knowledge and experience with others of similar roles and interests. Sevenoaks Town Council encourages these online activities and acknowledges that staff can improve their personal skills and experience through relevant interactions with others outside the Council . However, the Council has responsibility to ensure the operational effectiveness of its business, including its public image and for the protection of its information assets of all kinds. This involves ensuring confidentiality and maintaining security in accordance with good practice.

Staff whose role includes establishing, contributing to and maintaining official blogs and websites are guided via their individual job descriptions and related work instructions.

SCOPE
This policy applies to all employees employed by and working on behalf of Sevenoaks Town Council including contracted, non-contracted, temporary, honorary, secondments, bank, agency, or volunteers.

Users who are found to breach this policy on use of social media will be managed in line with the Council's Disciplinary Policy.

3.0 GUIDANCE

Social Media is the term commonly used for web-based and other mobile communications technologies that enable messages and opinions to be shared in dialogue with others.

Social Networking is the use of interactive web based sites or social media sites, allowing individuals on-line interactions that mimic some of the interactions between people with similar interests that occur in life. Popular examples include Facebook.com, Twitter.com and Linkedin.com.

Social Engineering is the method whereby an attacker uses human interaction (social skills) to deceive others to obtain information about an organisation and its information assets. An attacker may potentially masquerade as a respectable and plausible person claiming bona fide interest in the information concerned eg. posing as a member of the organisation's staff or maintenance contractor etc.

Blogging or Tweeting is using a public website to write an on-line diary (known as a blog) or sharing thoughts and opinions on various subjects. Blogs and Tweets are usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, and may include other material such as graphics or video. Many blogs and tweets are interactive allowing visitors to respond leaving comments or to potentially send messages to others. It is increasingly common for blogs to feature advertisements to financially benefit the blogger or to promote a blogger's favourite cause. The word blog is derived from the phrase Web LoG. Examples of these websites include Twitter.com and Blogging.com.

3.2 Private use of Social Media:
Never update your status telling people you are on holiday or not at home. For reason of personal security and also insurance companies view this as not taking 'all precautions necessary to prevent a theft' and as such your home insurance could be void should your property be broken into.

The internet is a public resource; once you put something on a social networking site the site owns all the rights to the information including the copy rights to all photographs.

Employees **may** use their designated facilities (e.g. normal work station) for their private social media purposes during their work breaks **ONLY**. This access is based on trust which may be removed if trust is breached. Please be aware a breach of these rules may lead to formal disciplinary action.

Users are ultimately responsible for their own online behavior. Staff and volunteers must take care to avoid online content or actions that are inaccurate, libelous, defamatory, harassment, threatening or may otherwise be illegal. It is possible for staff or contractors to be subject to civil proceedings or criminal prosecution.

It is important to remember that adhering to the Confidentiality Clauses in your contract applies equally whilst not at work as at work when any inference is made to work, either specifically or indirectly.

Users are not authorised on any social network to communicate by any means on behalf of the Council unless authorised in writing by the Mayor, or Town Clerk.

Where the Council allows access to the internet accessing any social networks is at the sole discretion of the Council and this is a privilege which may be removed without notice.

3.3 Sensitive and Confidential Information:
Users and contractors who use social media must not disclose information relating to the Council or which may be:
• Sensitive or
• Confidential or
• That is subject to a non-disclosure contract or agreement.

This applies to information about staff, Councillors, volunteers, local people. Suppliers and other information about the council and its day to day activities.

3.4 Departments considering using Social Media

The Clerk or Deputy Clerk may choose that using social media as means for communication has a benefit, however certain considerations must be made when scoping the use of social media.

Moderating the site must be done on the 5 working days of each week (Monday-Friday), in order that any malicious or malevolent comments are removed as soon as possible. This must be undertaken within the Council.

• Disclaimers on a social media sites does not remove the Council's obligations to accuracy and implications.

• Comments made to a social network site belong to the Council can be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

• A fully risk assessed business case must be completed identifying how the former issues are going to be addressed.