

BUCKLEY TOWN COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. Preamble

Although this policy is primarily directed to Staff, it also provides advice and guidance to Members on the use of Social Media in relation to their position as elected Members of the Council and when approved is accepted as guidance by Members.

2. Statement of policy and purpose of Policy

- a) Buckley Town Council (**the Employer**) recognises that social interaction on the internet is an important and integral part of life and, if used correctly, can offer valuable service opportunities. However, inappropriate use of social media can be a serious drain on productivity and can also pose significant business risks.
- b) It is the Council's policy that staff may not use social media during their hours of work, unless in the proper performance of their duties. In addition, the use by staff members of social media at any time, and whether or not using the Council's equipment, must comply with the rules set out in this policy.
- c) The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff understand:
 - (i) the extent to which personal use of social media is permitted during hours of work;
 - (ii) the limitations on their use of social media, whether used during or outside hours of work;
 - (iii) the types of use of social media that could expose them and the Council to legal liability.
- d) This is a statement of policy only and does not form part of the Staff's contract of employment. The Council may amend this policy at any time, in their absolute discretion.

3. Who and what does this policy apply to?

- a) This policy and the rules contained in it apply to:
 - (i) all Council Staff, irrespective of seniority, tenure and working hours, including all employees, members, consultants and contractors, casual or agency staff, trainees, home workers and fixed-term staff and any volunteers when using Council owned equipment and using Council Social Media sites;

- (ii) use by Staff of websites specifically aimed at social interaction such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Wikipedia and Twitter as well as blogging, participation in wikis and the use of interactive features or the ability to post or publish comments or information (including video, audio, photographs and text) with other people on other websites (**Social Media**);
- (iii) use of Social Media for business and/or personal purposes by Staff, whether or not during working hours and irrespective of whether the Council's equipment or resources are used.

4. Who is responsible for this policy?

- a) The Council has general responsibility for the oversight and updating of this policy. All Staff have personal responsibility to ensure compliance with this policy. Members have special responsibility for leading by example, ensuring their use of business and/or personal Social Media meets the requirements of the guidance and other notes below and ensuring members of Staff are familiar with this policy and for monitoring and enforcing compliance.

5. Business and personal use of social media

- a) All media enquiries (including requests for comments for publication on Social Media) should be directed to the Town Clerk and Financial Officer. If you are contacted by a media representative or asked for comment for publication about the Council or otherwise in connection with your employment, you should not respond unless you have been given authorisation by the Town Clerk and Financial Officer.
- b) Only Staff and/or Members specifically authorised by the Council (through the Town Clerk and Financial Officer) (**Authorised Business User**) may use Social Media on the Council's behalf as an organisation or otherwise or post comments on any of the Council's Social Media accounts or profiles. If you are authorised to do this, then the Council may require you to undergo training before undertaking such activities and you will be required to comply with additional guidance and instructions concerning these communications.
- c) Unless authorised Staff may not make any personal use of Social Media during their hours of work or using the Council's IT and communications resources and equipment (**IT Systems**).

6. Guidance on use of social media

The following notes provide advice and guidance to Members as well as Staff:

- a) **Personal capacity:** Unless an Authorised Business User, when using Social Media:
 - (i) you should make it clear that you are speaking in a personal capacity and not as the Council's representative, communicate in a way

consistent with that and if you choose to include contact information this should be personal and not Council contact details; and

- (ii) if you do elect to disclose your connection to the Council, then it must be clearly and expressly stated that your views do not represent those of the Council.

- b) **Permanent form:** It is always useful to bear in mind when posting any Social Media content or comment that they may be permanently and publicly available and that you may not be able later to delete or remove them. You should ensure that your communications are consistent with the image that you would like to present publicly, including to the Council and any future employers, colleagues, friends, business contacts and the world at large.

- c) **Personal liability:** Remember that you are personally responsible and may be legally liable for what you communicate on Social Media. Public statements of this type can create legal issues in a number of different ways including for being defamatory, breach of confidentiality, infringement of intellectual property or amounting to unlawful harassment.

- d) **Taking care to avoid misunderstandings:** Before posting comments, think about whether, even if innocently meant, they could be misconstrued in a way that creates legal problems or reputational damage for the Council or you. Steer away from commenting on sensitive topics relating to the Council or your employment. Such comments might damage the Council's reputation even if it is made clear that the views you express are personal.

- e) **Respecting privacy and confidentiality:** All individuals have information that they prefer to keep private. Do not post anything related to colleagues or clients, business partners, suppliers, vendors or other stakeholders without their written permission.

- f) **Respecting intellectual property:** If you post or reference material that is protected by intellectual property rights, you should satisfy yourself that you have taken steps to avoid legal liability such as appropriately referencing sources and ensuring that citations are accurate. If an Authorised Business User has questions about whether a particular post or upload to the Council's Social Media accounts or profiles might violate anyone's copyright or trademark, then you should check with the Town Clerk and Financial Officer.

7. **Prohibited uses of Social Media**

- a) Communications through Social Media, like all other modes of communication, must not breach the Council's disciplinary or workplace rules or any other policy and procedure and must not cause the Council to be in breach of obligations it owes to others. For example, you must not use Social Media in any way that:
 - (i) breaches obligations of confidentiality which are owed to the Council or to any third party or which causes the Council to breach duties of confidence which it owes to any third party.

- (ii) breaches the rights of Staff and/or Members to privacy, data protection and confidentiality or which amounts to bullying or harassment;
 - (iii) is offensive, insulting, discriminatory or obscene;
 - (iv) poses a threat to the Council's confidential information and intellectual property;
 - (v) infringes the intellectual property rights of any other person or entity;
 - (vi) defames, disparages or causes reputational damage to the Council or to any party with whom the Council have a business relationship, such as suppliers or customers;
 - (vii) breaches or causes the Council to breach any law or the rules or guidelines of any regulatory authority relevant to the Council's business;
 - (viii) breaches data protection rules;
 - (ix) breaches the Council's rules, policies or procedures for the use of its IT Systems or other equipment or resources.
 - (x) is dishonest, improper, unethical or deceptive (eg pretending to be someone);
 - (xi) is likely to damage your reputation or the Council's reputation.
- b) You may not use the Council's Crest or letterheads, or post any of the Council's confidential or proprietary information without prior written permission.
 - c) Information relating to business contacts that are made in the course of an individual's employment with the Council amounts to confidential information belonging to the Council.
 - d) No reference should be given for any person on a Social Media site (including any professional networking sites) on which the Council's identity is shown in any public or private part of the site. This applies whether the reference is positive or negative. The reason for this is that such references may otherwise be attributed to the Council and create legal liability both for the Council and for the author personally.

8. Monitoring

- a) Information stored in the Council's IT Systems belongs to the Council. Staff should have no expectation of privacy in any communication, document, information file, post or conversation (**Information**) which they send or receive, access, print or is stored using the Council's IT Systems. In particular, the Council may:

- (i) intercept, monitor and read any Information or activities using the Council's IT Systems, including Social Media use, to ensure compliance with the Council's rules and for the Council's legitimate business purposes. This may include use of recording devices or other surveillance methods, keystroke monitoring and other technologies. The Staff's continued use of the Council's IT Systems indicates their consent to this interception, monitoring and review;
- (ii) retain copies of Information for store copies of such data or communications after they are created and delete such copies from time to time without notice.

9. Breaches of policy

- a) Staff and Members must all contribute to protecting the business reputation of the Council. If you see content in Social Media that is defamatory, false or disparages or reflects poorly on the Council or our stakeholders, you should contact the Town Clerk and Financial Officer.
- b) Staff and/or Members who breach this policy:
 - (i) will be required to disclose relevant passwords and log in information if Council equipment and/or the Council's Social Media sites have been used and to otherwise co-operate with any investigation;
 - (ii) may be required to remove the offending internet postings, comment or information;
 - (iii) may be subject to disciplinary action.

MBW/LG

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Original document sourced through Rocket Lawyer and adapted accordingly.