

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY adopted 9/3/2016

Purpose:

Stroud Town Council wishes to use a broad range of media to communicate with residents and recognises that social media provide an opportunity to reach a wider audience than traditional communications channels. The primary opportunities for the use of social media are:

- To publicise Stroud Town Council meetings
- To direct residents to Stroud Town Council press releases and articles on the website www.stroudtown.gov.uk
- To direct residents to Stroud Town Council consultations
- To inform residents about consultations relevant to Stroud town being organised by external organisations, for example the District and Council councils, police or health services
- To communicate important information in an emergency, for example flooding or road closures
- To promote arts and cultural events in Stroud
- To advertise job and contract opportunities
- To publicise elections

Our rules and expectation:

The following refers to employees and councillors accessing social media as part of their role/employment.

1. Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any other council policies or expected standards of behaviour at work.
2. The use of social media should not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content (see below) and must not interfere with employees' duties or performance. Employees may be required to remove content which is considered to be in breach of this policy.
3. Information that will bring the council into disrepute is not to be discussed, referred to or stated on any internet website or any other social media channel.
4. The Stroud Town Council Logo must never be used when publishing information on websites unless permission has been given by the Mayor or Town Clerk.
5. Individuals (including councillors, employees and their families) must not be named, described nor have their photos published on any website, without their express permission being given in writing.
6. Councillors/employees should not comment on council matters until after any official announcement/statement by the Town Clerk or Mayor.

Employees and councillors should ensure that any communications from the Town Council will meet the following criteria:

- be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright;
- not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;
- if official council business it will be moderated by either the Mayor or the Clerk to the Town Council.
- social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

Equally, we expect any communications to the Town Council to meet the following criteria:

- be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- not contain content copied from elsewhere, for which the enquirer does not own the copyright;
- not sending large volumes of the same message (also called "spamming");
- not to contain anyone's personal information, other than necessary basic contact details.

Stroud Town Council's response to any communications received not meeting the above criteria will be to either moderate or edit the text, delete, inform the sender of our policy or send a brief response as appropriate.

This will be at the Council's discretion based on the message received, given our limited resources available.

Any information posted on the Facebook page not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. Repeat offenders will be blocked from the Facebook page.

Personal Use

The council respects the right of employees and councillors to freedom of expression, private and family life and therefore the intention is not to interfere with this right. However the following must be noted:

1. Employees and councillors must make it clear when publishing content online that they are speaking on their own behalf by writing in the first person and using a personal email address. Remember that what you publish has the

potential to be accessed for many years, even after the original content has been removed.

2. Information or remarks that will bring the council into disrepute are not to be discussed, referred to or stated on any internet website or online tool. However the council recognises that certain comments may amount to a 'protected disclosure' under laws on whistle blowing, which would give protective rights to the employee.
3. Publishing personal content should not be made using any Stroud Town Council email addresses or logos unless on an authorised site. All information on social media is subject to Freedom of Information requests so be aware of the council's liabilities. If in doubt check with the Town Clerk.
4. Individuals (including councillors, employees or their families) must not be named, described nor have their photos published on any website, without their express permission being given. However this does not apply where colleagues have an association through social media.
5. Please be aware the press may quote you from any public posts you make on social media, whether or not you are making them in your capacity as councillor or employee of the council. It is advisable to check your privacy settings and refrain from posting while tired or under the influence of alcohol.