# TONGE PARISH COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY GUIDELINES

Because councils will have different rules and expectations about the use of social media at work, policies should reflect the context in which staff are expected to work. These guidelines are designed to help councils consider the range of factors that may be relevant when drafting such a policy.

When drafting your Social Media Policy, use the following questions/points to guide the areas to cover:

- Who will the policy apply to?
- Define what you mean by social media and give examples of what you would include.
- When does the social media policy apply? In work hours and out of work hours? On personal equipment and equipment owned by the council?
- How does each social media platform relate to the work environment? For example, does the council encourage all staff to Tweet as a way to raise awareness, but has a different policy to Facebook?
- Many staff will have a personal social media profile and this will rarely impact on their work-life. However, in drafting your policy you should consider setting expectations about how the council is portrayed and whether you allow the council to be associated with staff through their personal social media platforms.
- Personal use of social media – is this permitted during working hours? Is this permitted on council equipment? When should personal devices be used? What restrictions do you want to consider?
- Do the employees' duties require them to speak on behalf of the council on social media? If yes, should any approvals be sought? Is any training required? What should employees do if they are contacted by the press or social media outlet for comment?
- Do you have specific 'dos' and 'don'ts' for your employees when using social media? For example, most councils will need to make the following rules clear to all staff but you may have particular rules. Staff must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about the council or its stakeholders; they should make it clear in social media postings that they are speaking on their own behalf (unless they are posting as part of their job role); They must not post comments about sensitive community topics, such as planning applications. If they see content on social media that disparages or reflects poorly on the council they should refer this to the Clerk or Chair of the council. They must not post anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, an individual. Most councils will stipulate that these rules apply as much to personal social media as they do to the council's accounts.
- Employers have the right, in certain circumstances, to monitor their employee's usage of the internet or email at work. Your policy (and Privacy Notice) should make this clear if that is your practice.

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- Do you use social media as part of your recruitment processes, i.e. do you use internet searches to perform due diligence on candidates? If this is relevant, then this should also be reflected in your Privacy Notice.
- Make clear that any breach of the policy may lead to action being taken under the council's disciplinary policy.
- Remember that social media is constantly changing and charities should regularly review its social media policy to ensure it is up-to-date.

**Guidance**

Where there is text in [square brackets] this part may be updated or be deleted if not relevant. An alternative option may have been provided.

**Important notice**

This is an example of an employment policy designed for a small council adhering to statutory minimum requirements and does not constitute legal advice. As with all policies it should be consistent with your terms and conditions of employment.

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This document has been written by Worknest HR – a company that provides HR advice and guidance to town and parish councils. Please contact them on 01403 240 205 for information about their services.