LISKEARD TOWN COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Section A: Aims of use of social media

The aims of the Council's expansion into social media include:

1. To enhance the Council's communication.
2. To communicate with more people, including young people and harder to reach groups
3. To provide information for people who can't get to the Council offices and Tourist Information Centre (TIC).
4. To promote and provide positive publicity for the town, town centre, town organisations, town events and town council.
5. To receive residents' views and issues.
6. To provide an alternative way for residents to communicate their views, issues and questions, bearing in mind that some are more comfortable communicating online.
7. To promote two-way communication and consultation.

Section B: Types of Social Media

1. Liskeard Town Council (LTC) will use:
   - Facebook
   - Twitter
2. Use of any new social media channels must be authorised by a resolution of the Communications and Engagement committee

Section C: Responsibilities & appropriate use

The social media accounts will be the responsibility of the Town Clerk and will be administered by those staff suitably trained and authorised to do so.

1. The Town Clerk will monitor and offer guidance as required.
2. Councillors will not be involved in 'official posting' unless authorised for a specific event. Councillors are encouraged to promote the pages.
3. No member of staff or Councillor should post in their personal capacity on the LTC Facebook page.
4. Councillors are encouraged to send information and photographs of events attended etc to the office for official posting. The information will then be retained in the Council's archives for future reference. Councillors can then be repost, retweet or share on their own accounts.

5. Staff or Councillors who comment on council posts from their own accounts must do so in their official capacity

6. Social media must be used for lawful purposes only and must comply with relevant legislation and the Council's own policies.

7. Posts must not publish or link to any posts or content (text, images or video) that may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection and confidence or other claims for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, discriminatory, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the Council into disrepute.

8. Staff and members must not promote personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns via town council social media accounts. Posts must not be of a political nature or for specific campaigning.

9. Be vigilant towards social engineering and phishing attacks (cybercrime where contact is made by email, telephone or text message by someone posing as a legitimate institution) through social media in the same way as you would email i.e. be cautious when receiving 'direct messages' which contain links.

Section D: Administration guidelines

1. LTC will only 'like' or follow individuals and organisations appropriate to the role of the town council and its policies.

2. LTC will reply as appropriate where posts are not abusive/using inappropriate language.

3. Users who do post abusively or use inappropriate language will be warned once and then blocked or banned.

4. The decision of the Town Clerk will be final.

Section E: Content & style guidelines

1. Official posts must express no personal opinions; only factual information or council policy.

2. In general, anything that would be allowed on the LTC noticeboards will be allowed on social media.
   a. General content should include:
      i. Regular items
      ii. Next meeting: main topics.
      iii. Major town events.
      iv. Photos from events/engagements if available.
   b. As and when items
      i. Consultations.
      ii. Elections – reminder when and where to vote.
      iii. Important public information (e.g. road closures etc.).
   c. Periodic reminders
      i. Allotments.
      ii. Public Hall hire.
      iii. Community grants budget.
      iv. Notice-boards

    d.   Details of the Eva Bowles, Philip Blamey and Alex Page Trusts.

3. Post using 'we' rather than 'I' to emphasise the corporate nature of the information.

4. Write clearly and courteously, keeping the tone formal but friendly. Postings should be in plain English. Posts should follow the tone of voice for that account, for example this will differ between the Town Council, Visit Liskeard and Your Liskeard accounts.

5. Add photographs where possible.

6. Use appropriate symbols, such as hashtags on topics so people can easily focus on what they want to read.

7. If a post requires a response of general interest (e.g. about a road closure) post to everyone. If it requires an individual response (e.g. about a casework issue) this should be sent privately via an appropriate communication channel.

8. If a query relates to something that LTC doesn't deal with, give as much information as possible about whom to contact and how to contact them. Remember that, as they are already online, a link to a web page or email address may be better than a phone number.

Section F: Civility and respect social media guide for councillors

When councillors use social media, the Code of Conduct may apply. Under the Localism Act 2011, the Code of Conduct will only likely apply when acting in the role of councillor and is unlikely to affect councillors using social media in a private capacity.

Councillors who wish to use social media in their capacity as a councillor should consider having separate social media accounts. This will help to avoid confusion, both for yourself and others. For example, on Facebook, this can be done by setting up a public Facebook Page where you use the 'Councillor' label before your name.

Regardless of the platform councillors use, it can be useful to indicate what the purpose of your profile or page is. This will help to make clear that it is a public page or profile you are using in your capacity as a councillor.

It is the responsibility of councillors to manage their social media. Councillors should consider, for example, how you will handle the moderation of comments and messages.

The Council suggests that councillors consider the following guidance when using social media in their councillor role:

1. Be as open, inclusive and professional as possible when using social media.

2. Get and give support. Where you feel able, provide support to fellow councillors online, and reach out to colleagues and your council for support where needed.

3. If you are unsure about posting something, stop and ask for advice from an appropriate source first, before doing anything else.

4. Bear in mind that what you post can affect the reputation of the council

5. The council is a corporate decision-making body. Councillors cannot independently make decisions for the council over social media.

6. You should make clear you are expressing personal views and opinions, and not speaking on behalf of the council unless authorised by the council to do so.

7. For some issues and communications, responses may need to come from the council's official social media, rather than individual councillors responding.

8. Councillors should be mindful of the difference between fact and opinion.

9. Elected members play a central role in preventing the spread of disinformation.

10. Don't leave your social media to take care of itself. Social media doesn't stop - it keeps going all day every day.

11. Don't dismiss or ignore advice and guidance, particularly legal advice.

12. Don't assume that a disclaimer or excuses will prevent someone from taking legal action against you.

13. Make sure that your social media accounts are safe and protected with strong passwords and multiple-factor authentication where possible.

14. Understand privacy settings. There is a range of settings to help you manage who can see or comment on your posts.

15. Consider personal mental health and well-being. Taking a break from social media from time to time can be beneficial.

Section G: Rules of engagement with external parties and members of the public when engaging via social media

1. Engaging with the council on social media

   a. The council encourages members of the public, local organisations and community groups, members of the press, local councillors and others in our wider community to follow and engage with the council through social media accounts.

   b. We also encourage everyone in our community to share content from our corporate social media accounts with their own social media networks. This is especially important, for example, during emergency situations or where sharing timely information is essential.

   c. Councillors may choose to engage with the community on their own 'Councillor' social media accounts.

   d. Individuals and organisations are responsible for the content that they choose to post to their social media accounts. This includes content created by others that individuals or organisations choose to repost, retweet or share.

2. Conduct on social media

   a. The Council will treat everyone with courtesy and respect on its social media channels, and we therefore ask for the same in return from those who choose to engage with us.

   b. We ask that council staff and councillors are treated courteously. Council staff and councillors should never be subjected to bullying or other forms of abuse or harassment.

   c. Council staff and councillors have the right to carry out their civic duties and work without fear of being attacked or abused. Any behaviour whether that be verbal, physical or in writing, which causes either councillors or council staff to feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or threatened, is unacceptable.

3. Reporting a civility and respect-related issue

    a. Council staff and others operating the Council's social media accounts will always be mindful of the council's relevant policies, procedures and processes, including the Code of Conduct.

    b. The council will record and report abuse directed at the Council. The Council may, for example, create screenshots of comments and keep a record of abusive or threatening communications, and may take further action as appropriate.

    c. Council staff and councillors should not have to put up with abusive or threatening behaviour. When subjected to such behaviour. The council reserves the right to enact its relevant social media policies and may, for example, delete content, block individuals or report individuals to social media platforms when appropriate to do so.

    d. The Council may need to report issues of poor conduct directly to social media platforms. For instance, if someone has created a 'fake account' or if someone is persistently abusive to the Council.

    e. The Council reserves the right to report criminal matters it notices on social media to the Police. For instance, hate crime/speech or threats of violence.

    f. Please get in touch with the Council if you feel that a councillor, member of staff or a user of our social media has failed to act in a civil and respectful way on our social media.
You can contact **Steve Vinson** the **Town Clerk** in the following ways:
Address: Liskeard Town Council, 3 – 5 West Street, Liskeard PL14 6BW
Telephone: 01579 345407
Email: townclerk@liskeard.gov.uk
Further information is contained in the Complaints Policy available from our website at
https://www.liskeard.gov.uk/key-documents/policies-and-procedures/

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Communications and Engagement Committee which will recommend any changes to the Council.

Adopted by Liskeard Town Council 3 September 2018
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Review January 2024