Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

Draft Social Media Policy

1.   Introduction

1.1.   This policy is intended to help staff make appropriate decisions about the use of social media. It outlines the standards the Council requires staff to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which we will monitor staff use of social media and the action we will take in respect of breaches of this policy.

1.2.   This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Bebo, YouTube, Google+, Instagram and all other social networking sites, internet postings and blogs. It applies to the use of social media for business purposes as well as personal use that may affect the business of the Council in any way.

1.3.   This policy should be read in conjunction with the Council's Information Security Policy, Data Protection Policy, Social Media Guidelines for the Public and Staff Twitter Guidelines.

1.4.   This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

2.   Who is covered by the policy?

2.1.   This policy covers all staff working for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council.

3.   Scope of the policy

3.1.   All staff are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the interests of the Council and its services, employees, councillors, partners and customers.

3.2.   Breach of this policy may be dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.

4.   Responsibility for implementation of the policy

4.1.   The Director of Central Services has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. He will monitor and review the policy and make recommendations for changes as appropriate.

4.2.   All staff are responsible for their own compliance with this policy and for ensuring that it is consistently applied. All staff should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the Director of Central Services.

5.   Authorisation to use Council's social media sites

5.1.   Services that have expressed an interest in using social media have selected key staff who are authorised to post tweets/messages on the Council's social media sites. Only these authorised staff are permitted to post material on social media websites in the name of the Council and on its behalf. Any breach of this restriction will amount to gross misconduct.

6.   What is social media?

6.1.   Social media is the term commonly given to web-based tools, which allow users to interact with each other in some way; for example by sharing information, opinions, knowledge, interests or

data (such as photos, videos and music) online. As the name implies, social media involves the building of online communities or networks to promote discussion and build relationships.

6.2.   Social media tools include social networking sites such as Facebook, Google+, Twitter, Bebo and MySpace; content-sharing websites such as Flickr (images), YouTube (videos), Instagram (images and videos); work-related networking sites such as LinkedIn; wikis (e.g. Wikipedia); blogs; message boards and many other similar online channels.

7.   Why use social media?

7.1.   Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council is committed to making the best use of available technology to improve the way it does business with its customers. The rapid uptake of social media in recent years has transformed the communications 'landscape' and presents the Council with opportunities to engage with people in new and innovative ways.

8.   Objective

8.1.   The Council's objective in using social media is to increase access to and awareness of its services.

9.   Social media currently used by the Council

9.1.   The Council has the following corporate accounts:
Twitter   - https://twitter.com/TMBC_Kent
Facebook
Flickr
Instagram
You Tube

9.2.   Only staff authorised to use the official accounts are allowed to post comments.

9.3.   The accounts are usually monitored from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

9.4.   Other social media tools may be considered from time to time by the Council. This policy will be adapted as other social media tools are introduced for Council use.

10. What does the Council use social media for?

10.1.   The Council uses social media to:

- Promote news, events, activities and services
- Communicate with people during emergency situations (e.g. flooding, severe weather)
- Communicate with people in 'real time' during key events and situations (such as elections, refuse collection in bad weather)
- Target messages to specific groups e.g. young people
- Keep the Council at the forefront of the minds of its customers
- Consult with customers on key issues
- Help shape policy development
- Share ideas with partner organisations and beyond
- Gain an insight into public opinion
- Advertise meetings
- Deal swiftly with complaints and comments
- Correct misinformation
- Promote the Council's 'Channel Shift' agenda by linking social media posts to its website and encouraging customer self-service
- Generate extra traffic to its website and encourage greater customer involvement with

minimal effort
- Display photos and post videos to help promote events and services

11. Rules for staff use of social media for business purposes

11.1. Those authorised to post information on behalf of the Council, must always:

- Use the official account, so it is clear it that the message is from Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council.
- Be honest, accurate, factual and fair. If you make a mistake be prompt in admitting it and correct it.
- You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools – be aware that what you publish will be there for many years.
- Be polite, even when disagreeing with someone.
- Respect the audience and do not publish anything that would not be acceptable in the workplace.
- Check what is about to be disclosed is public information, accurate and not protected.
- Do not disclose information, make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of the Council unless authorised to do so.
- Respect intellectual property rights and copyright and make sure you have the right permissions to use images/music/videos.
- Reply to comments as quickly as possible, but take time to consider the response as you would with a letter or email.
- Never contribute to a discussion if you are angry or upset. Return to it later when you can contribute in a calm and rational manner.
- Use plain English. Where it is felt relevant, write in the first person ("I" rather than "The Council") if it is appropriate to sound less formal and more conversational.
- Be an ambassador for the Council and do not bring it into disrepute.
- Monitor the account regularly so as to ensure timely responses.
- Assess any potential risks and ensure you have plans in place to mitigate these risks.
- Do not publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claims for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the Council into disrepute.

- Do not upload, post or forward content belonging to a third party unless you have their permission to do so.

- Do not post, upload, forward or post a link to chain mail, junk mail, cartoons, jokes or gossip.

- Do not use social media for party political purposes or specific campaigning purposes as the Council is not permitted to publish material which 'in whole or part appears to affect public support for a political party' (LGA 1986).

- Social media must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns.

- It must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner. Do not upload, post, forward or post a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.

- If you feel even slightly uneasy about something you are about to publish, then you shouldn't do it. If in doubt, always discuss it with your line manager first.

- It must not be used for actions that would put Council representatives in breach of the Council's Code of Conduct or policies relating to elected members or staff.

- Where individuals from partner organisations are involved and are acting on behalf of the Council, they will also be expected to comply with the relevant Council policies.

- Staff should not, in principle, post social media messages on Council sites on behalf of other organisations, although messages can be retweeted if appropriate. There may be exceptions to this rule, which should be discussed individually with your line manager as/when they arise.

- You must only use generic @tmbc.gov.uk email addresses in corporate social media. No personal email addresses should be used.

- Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them and never publish anyone else's contact details.

- The use of the Council's logo and other branding elements should be used where appropriate to indicate the Council's support. The logo should not be used on social media which is unrelated to or not representative of the Council's official position.

- Council representatives should ensure that any contributions they make are professional and uphold the reputation of the Council.

- Council representatives must not promote or comment on political matters or issues that may be regarded as such.

- Staff, such as fraud investigators, who use social media as part of their work must comply with relevant legislation and guidance.

- Any member of staff who feels that they have been harassed or bullied or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform the Director of Central Services immediately.

12. Personal use of social media sites at work

12.1 The Council permits the incidental use of social media for personal use when at work, subject to certain conditions set out below. However, this is a privilege and not a right and we reserve the right to withdraw our permission at any time at our discretion.

12.2 The following conditions apply to personal use:

(a) Use is occasional and reasonable
(b) Use must not interfere with business or office commitments
(c) Use must comply with other Council policies e.g. Equalities policy

12.3 Employees who breach the above requirements may be subject to disciplinary investigation.

12.4 Anything posted should respect copyright and be consistent with the relevant legislation and rules including Data Protection Act 1998, Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003, ASA CAP code and the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

13. Misuse of social media

13.1. Staff should be aware that misuse of social media at work, or where a complaint is received by the Council citing individual misuse of social media, whether at work or not, is likely to result in an investigation as per the Council's Disciplinary Procedure. Monitoring will only be carried out to the extent permitted or as required by law and as necessary and justifiable.

13.2. We reserve the right to restrict or prevent access to certain social media at work if we consider personal use to be excessive.

13.3. Misuse of social media can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and/or the Council. It may cause embarrassment to the Council and its customers.

13.4. Employees are urged to be mindful that, uploading, forwarding or posting a link, 'liking', 'sharing' or commenting on posts or tweets of the following types of material on social media, whether in a personal or professional capacity, may form the basis of a complaint that the Council would have to investigate under the Disciplinary Procedure (note: list is not exhaustive):
- Material which is offensive, obscene, criminal, discriminatory, defamatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the Council, its partner organisations, councillors or staff
- Confidential information about the Council or any of its staff, councillors or partner organisations
- Any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil and whether for you or the Council)
- Material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of a person

13.5 Following the receipt of a complaint, where evidence of misuse is found, the Council may undertake a more detailed investigation involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records and, if necessary, such information may be handed over to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.

13.6 If you notice any use of social media by other members of staff in breach of this policy, please report it to the Director of Central Services.

14. Social Media in your personal life

14.1 The Council recognises that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. While they are not acting on behalf of the Council, employees should be aware that they can damage the Council if they are recognised as being one of its employees, for example if this is stated in their social media profiles.

14.2 So as to avoid complaints against staff made in connection with the Council's Anti-Bullying and Harassment Procedure, Whistleblowing Charter, Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure, employees are advised to consider whether any communications made in a personal capacity through social media could be deemed to :

- breach confidentiality, for example by disclosing information about a colleague or member of the public;

- be discriminatory, for example by making offensive or derogatory remarks relating to e.g. race, religion or belief, disability, gender, or, by posting, 'liking', 'sharing' or commenting on posts or tweets that could be considered discriminatory or offensive;

- be bullying or harassment, for example by making derogatory comments about a colleague ;

- bring the Council into disrepute by, for example, making defamatory comments, 'liking', 'sharing' or commenting on posts or tweets about another organisation with which the employee may network in the course of their job.

14.3 You should make it clear in social media postings, and in your personal profile, that you are speaking on your own behalf. Write in the first person and use a personal email address.

14.4 If you disclose your employment with the Council on your profile or in any social media postings, you must state that your views do not represent those of your employer.

14.4 Employees should be aware that use of Social Media (reported by colleagues or members of the public) that could be deemed a breach of these guidelines, may lead to disciplinary investigation under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure. Serious breaches of these guidelines, for example incidents of bullying colleagues or social media activity causing serious reputational damage to the Council, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to action in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure up to and including dismissal.

15 More information

For more information or if you want to use social media as part of your service's communications please contact Linda Moreau, Janet Saunders or Sally Seal on 01732 876008/9 or email mediateam@tmbc.gov.uk

Note: Please see pages 7 and 8 for Staff Twitter Guidelines for practical tips on how to tweet effectively on behalf of the Council.

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

Staff Twitter Guidelines - Practical tips on how to tweet effectively

Introduction

These Guidelines provide some useful practical tips on how and when to tweet on behalf of the Council. Only officers who have been authorised to tweet on behalf of the Council may do so. Please make sure you have read the following Council documents **before** you begin to post tweets:

- Social Media Policy
- Social Media Guidelines for the Public
- Information Security Policy
- Data Protection Policy

Useful tips on how to tweet

- Be accurate, honest, timely and comprehensive.
- Get to the point. You've only got 140 characters.
- Post tweets/messages in good time and respond quickly.
- Deal with one issue at a time
- Make sure you give a complete message. You may link to a web page for more information, but the main message should be in the tweet.
- Use plain language, rather than bureaucratic language or jargon.
- Use the 'active' voice e.g. 'collect your blue bag', not 'you can collect', or 'blue bags can be collected'.
- Adopt a friendly tone, use humour if appropriate and let your personality shine through! Twitter users tend to prefer a direct and genuine tone.
- Compress phone numbers as it's easier to copy/paste them or autodial.
- Use shortened links/URLs.
- Acknowledge when people are being helpful, constructive, co-operative and patient.
- Apologise if you get something wrong or when people have been disappointed or inconvenienced
- Take time to re-read and spell check your tweet to make sure it's accurate and correct.
- If you are unsure of how to reply, seek advice before responding.
- Always be professional and don't get riled. Don't let emotions cloud your judgement.
- Remember that people can't send you a direct message through Twitter unless you follow them. Therefore following people back increases the chance of people communicating with the Council.
- Don't 'spam' followers by sending too many messages out at once or they may soon stop following you! Use SocialSignIn to pre-schedule messages to be released throughout the day.

Hashtags

-
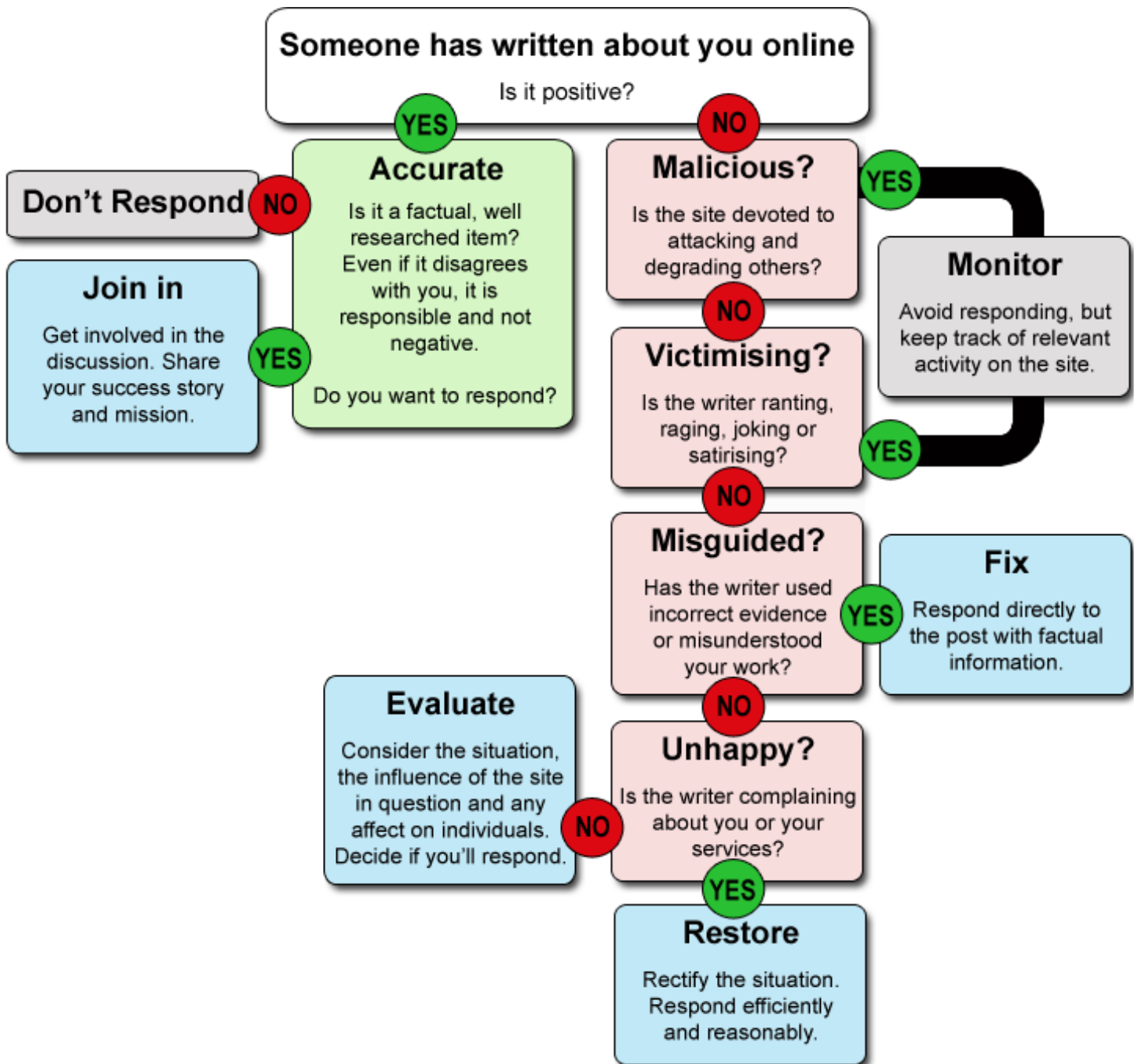 Hashtags are optional. Users often start key words in their tweets with a '#' to categorise them for others who might wish to search for that subject. For example, if you search for #Tonbridgefloods you will find any tweets tagged with these words.

Retweeting (RT)

- Only RT relevant, topical or useful information to your followers.
- Do not RT too many items or followers will think you have nothing original to say!

Quick guide to making a response

The guide below gives a good indication of when to respond to comments on social media.

Someone has written about you online
Is it positive?

YES → **Accurate**
Is it a factual, well researched item? Even if it disagrees with you, it is responsible and not negative.

Do you want to respond?

NO → **Don't Respond**

YES → **Join in**
Get involved in the discussion. Share your success story and mission.

NO → **Malicious?**
Is the site devoted to attacking and degrading others?

YES → **Monitor**
Avoid responding, but keep track of relevant activity on the site.

NO → **Victimising?**
Is the writer ranting, raging, joking or satirising?

YES → **Monitor**

NO → **Misguided?**
Has the writer used incorrect evidence or misunderstood your work?

YES → **Fix**
Respond directly to the post with factual information.

NO → **Unhappy?**
Is the writer complaining about you or your services?

NO → **Evaluate**
Consider the situation, the influence of the site in question and any affect on individuals. Decide if you'll respond.

YES → **Restore**
Rectify the situation. Respond efficiently and reasonably.

Before you respond…

Be transparent	Cite sources	Don't rush	Get the tone right	Focus
Be honest about your connection to the story.	Be clear about your sources, and include links to them.	Take time to make your response a good one	Reflect your organisation's richness and test your response on a colleague.	Focus on your most influential online activity.

Chart from LGCommunications Guide to Social Media May 2011