

# THRAPSTON TOWN COUNCIL

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## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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1. As a Town Council we understand the importance of the use of IT and social media both for the Town Council and individual use. However, these systems must be used and monitored responsibly by all employees at all times. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that social media is used in a correct and responsible manner, with the best interests of the Town Council in mind.

Any breach of this policy, which should be read in conjunction with the Email and Internet policy, can lead to disciplinary action being taken, up to and including termination of your employment.

For the purpose of this policy, social media relates to all communications made through the internet including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Blogs and Wikis. Any internet communications must be used in the best interests of the Town Council.

### **2. Council Use**

The Town Council promotes activities through social media and internet communications. Any employee doing this on behalf of the Town Council must do so in a professional manner. The following rules for using social media on behalf of the Town Council apply:

- as with emails, all communications should follow the same standard as would be expected in all written communication with the Town Council
- only authorised spokespersons must post information on behalf of the Town Council
- employees responsible for using social media for the Town Council must not use it for their own personal purposes (see 'personal use')
- employees must not discuss or disclose proprietary or confidential information of the Town Council on any social media sites
- any negative communication by other parties or employees that may damage the Town Council must be dealt with accordingly, and if possible, removed.

### **3. Personal Use**

Although social media can be used in order to promote the Town Council, employees must not use social media sites for their own private use in working hours. Employees are responsible for what they use social media for both at work and off duty. As with email, the Town Council reserves the right to monitor all social media usage that it has access to. Any posting that violates any Council policies or is otherwise seen as inappropriate may be removed or modified at the Town Council's sole discretion.

Any communications made with other employees through social media outside of working hours must still be done with the best interests of the Town Council in mind. If you are posting information or photographs of other employees outside of working hours, you should still seek their permission to post these before doing so.

### **4. Social Media Rules**

The Town Council recognises that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity outside the workplace and outside normal working hours. While they are not acting on behalf of the Town Council in these circumstances, employees must be aware that they can still cause damage to the Town Council if they are recognised online

as being one of its employees. Therefore, it is important that the Town Council has strict social media rules in place to protect its position.

When logging on to and using social media websites and blogs at any time, including personal use on non-Council computers outside the workplace and outside normal working hours, employees must not:

- other than in relation to the Town Council's own social media activities or other than where expressly permitted by the Town Council on Council networking websites such as LinkedIn, publicly identify themselves as working for the Town Council, make reference to the Town Council or provide information from which others can ascertain the name of the Town Council
- other than in relation to the Town Council's own social media activities or other than where expressly permitted by the Town Council on Council networking websites such as LinkedIn, write about their work for the Town Council. In postings that could be linked to the Town Council, they must also ensure that any personal views expressed are clearly stated to be theirs alone and do not represent those of the Town Council
- conduct themselves in a way that is potentially detrimental to the Town Council or brings the Town Council or its residents, customers, contractors or suppliers into disrepute, for example by posting images or video clips that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate website content
- other than in relation to the Town Council's own social media activities or other than where expressly permitted by the Town Council on Council networking websites such as LinkedIn, use their work e-mail address when registering on such sites or provide any link to the Town Council's website
- allow their interaction on these websites or blogs to damage working relationships with or between employees, residents, contractors or suppliers of the Town Council, for example by criticising or arguing with such persons
- include personal information or data about the Town Council's employees, residents, customers, contractors or suppliers without their express consent (an employee may still be liable even if employees, residents, customers, contractors or suppliers are not expressly named in the websites or blogs as long as the Town Council reasonably believes they are identifiable) - this could constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act 1998 which is a criminal offence
- make any derogatory, offensive, discriminatory, untrue, negative, critical or defamatory comments about the Town Council, its employees, residents, customers, contractors or suppliers (an employee may still be liable even if the Town Council, its employees, residents, customers, contractors or suppliers are not expressly named in the websites or blogs as long as the Town Council reasonably believes they are identifiable)
- make any comments about the Town Council's employees that could constitute unlawful discrimination, harassment or cyber-bullying contrary to the Equality Act 2010 or post any images or video clips that are discriminatory or which may constitute unlawful harassment or cyber-bullying - employees can be personally liable for their actions under the legislation
- disclose any confidential or sensitive information belonging to the Town Council, its employees, residents, customers, contractors or suppliers
- breach copyright or any other proprietary interest belonging to the Town Council, for example, using someone else's images or written content without permission or failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce particular work - if employees wish to post images, photographs or videos of their work colleagues, residents, customers, contractors or suppliers on their online profile, they should first obtain the other party's express permission to do so.

5. **Social Media Monitoring**

The Town Council reserves the right to monitor employees' use of social media on the Internet, both during routine audits of the computer system and in specific cases where a problem relating to excessive or unauthorised use is suspected. The purposes for such monitoring is to:

- promote productivity and efficiency
- ensure the security of the system and its effective operation
- make sure there is no unauthorised use of the Town Council's time
- ensure that inappropriate, restricted or blocked websites are not being accessed by employees
- make sure there is no breach of confidentiality.

The Town Council reserves the right to restrict, deny or remove Internet access, or access to particular social media websites, to or from any employee.

Employees must remove any offending content immediately if they are asked to do so by the Town Council.

Employees should remember that social media websites are public forums, even if they have set their account privacy settings at a restricted access or "friends only" level, and therefore they should not assume that their postings on any website will remain private.

Employees should be security conscious when using social media websites and should take appropriate steps to protect themselves from identity theft, for example by placing their privacy settings at a high level and restricting the amount of personal information they give out, e.g. date and place of birth. This type of information may form the basis of security questions and/or passwords on other websites, such as online banking.

Should employees notice any inaccurate information about the Town Council online, they should report this to the Clerk in the first instance.

If you are unsure as to what could be deemed inappropriate in terms of social media use, please contact the Clerk for further information. This policy is to be used in conjunction with all other Council policies, including Code of Conduct and the Disciplinary policy.

All terms contained within this policy remain relevant to you, post-employment, if you make any reference to the Town Council, derogatory or otherwise that causes any detriment to the Town Council or its customers, we will look to recover any potential damages and/or losses incurred.

***The Town Council reserves the right to amend and update this policy from time to time.***

Adopted by the Town Council  
23<sup>rd</sup> June 2020

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Chairman

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Town Clerk