

DESBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL

Social Media Policy

This policy provides Councillors, volunteers, and staff, an overview of Social Media and outlines the Council's position on various aspects of their use. In addition, it includes guidelines on Officer, Volunteer, and Councillor responsibilities when using such channels of communication.

Social media is a term for commonly used web content based on user participation and user-generated content. They include social networking sites and other sites that are centred on user interaction.

Examples of popular social media tools include: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Groupings of interest are a natural feature of the development of such systems with people with similar interests being attracted to share information.

The Council will use social media platform/s as an additional channel of communication of key information and advice to local residents – this activity will not replace existing forms of communication including the website and Town Council notice-board.

The Council may choose to use social media to:

- Share Town Council notices and public documents, including agendas, minutes and calls to meetings
- Make announcements on new information from the Town Council (Including advertising of vacancies and appointments)
- Advertise Town Council events and activities
- Re-post or share information from other public or partner bodies, including Government, North Northants Council, Police, Health etc.
- Post or share information from other Town Council-related groups
- Poll/survey local residents on key Town Council matters

Links to Town Council Social Media platforms will be shared from the Town Council Website and may only be linked to from other groups/sites by agreement of the Town Council. Platforms will be moderated by an agreed group of Town Councillors and staff (Moderators) – content will only be posted by Moderators in accordance with Town Council Business. Content will not be posted by individual Councillors – posts will be made by the Town Council. Sharing of Town Council Social Media posts will be permitted.

Posts and content on Town Council Media platforms will be set to broadcast-only – to keep our platforms safe and respectful the ability to comment on posts will not be permitted. Any messaging or queries will be referred to the Moderators, with responses by the Clerk where required.

No political posts or posts relating to any individual party, Councillor, Staff, Volunteer or Candidate (before any elections) will be permitted on Town Council Social Media Platforms.

Individual Councillors, volunteers, and staff may have personal accounts on social media and may use these for their own purposes.

Individual Councillors, volunteers, and staff must ensure that they use social media sensibly and responsibly, and ensure that its use will not adversely affect the Council or its business, nor be damaging to the Council's reputation and credibility or otherwise violate any Council policies.

Safeguarding

Councillors share the community and parents concern about crime and ASB. Those who are victims of or witness serious anti social behaviour by adults or children are advised to report this to Northants police through 101 or on www.northants.police.gov

The council appreciates the range of online risks which are present particularly to children and also to communities, and that identifying other people's children online is illegal. No pictures of children will be reproduced without express permission of parents/legal guardians. Councillors will not initiate any activity which identifies other people's children on social media without express consent from those with parental responsibility (except children who are missing or in danger and then only consistent with assisting police).

Guidelines

Whilst Social Media tools are very useful to share information quickly with other people, there are pitfalls to be aware of:

- the information in most cases is shared in the public domain and can be viewed by anyone in the world. In many cases it is not even necessary to register to view the content. Registering is only required should you wish to participate and post to the site;
- groups on specific themes can set up easily and posts then edited by the owners of that group to reflect their single interest, ensuring theirs is the only voice heard;
- there is no guarantee of truth,
- the nature of these tools is that information is shared immediately and it is all too easy to respond instantaneously which can result in unintentionally inflaming a situation. Information can then be shared with other sites and be spread far beyond the intended audience
- it is very easy to spend a lot of time viewing and responding to messages that would outweigh any value gained in the first place.

The following guidelines will apply to online participation and set out the standards of behaviour expected as a representative of Desborough Town Council:

All staff volunteers, and Councillors

- Be aware of and recognise your responsibilities identified in the Social Media Policy, and the Council's Code of Conduct.
- Remember that you are personally responsible for the content you publish on any form of social media.
- Never give out personal details of others such as home address and telephone numbers.
- Ensure that you handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the Data Protection legislation.
- When using social media for personal purposes, you must not imply you are speaking for the Council. Avoid use of the Council e-mail address, logos or other Council identification
- Show respect to all. You should be respectful of the authority and employees. Derogatory comments are always wrong.

Volunteers

Volunteers must not use Social Media accounts in relation to the Council's business.

Councillors

- Councillors are at liberty to set up accounts using any of the tools available but should ensure they are clearly identified as personal and do not in any way imply that they reflect the Council's view. Councillors should at all times present a professional image and not disclose anything of a confidential nature. Comments of a derogatory, proprietary or libellous nature should not be made and care should be taken to avoid guesswork, exaggeration and colourful language.
- Know your obligations: you must comply with other Council policies when using social media. For example, you should be careful not to breach Council confidentiality and proprietary information policies.
- Where Councillors choose to use personal accounts for the Council's business they must make it clear that what they say is representative of their personal views only. Where possible a standard disclaimer could be used such as: "*Statements and opinions here are my own and don't necessarily represent the Council's policies or opinions*".