

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY



Introduction

A revolution is taking place in how we communicate. The world is experiencing the biggest ever change in how information is created and owned, as well as the speed in which it can be shared. This is changing the way we live, work and even how we speak and think.

Social media is a blanket term applied to a range of online multimedia tools that are used for creating content and two-way communication. They can be accessed via your smartphone, PC, laptop, tablet or smart TV. All social media accounts are free of charge and can be set up quickly and easily from an Internet page.

1. Policy statement

1.1. This policy is intended to help employees and elected members make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as social networking websites, forums, message boards, blogs or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Next Door, Facebook and LinkedIn.

1.2. This policy outlines the standards the Council requires employees and elected members to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which your use of social media will be monitored and the action that will be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.

2. The scope of the policy

2.1. All employees and elected members are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the Council.

2.2. Breach of this policy by employees may be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.

2.3. Breach of this policy by elected members will be dealt with under the Code of Conduct.

3. Responsibility for implementation of the policy

- 3.1. The Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
- 3.2. The Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to our work.
- 3.3. All employees and elected members should ensure that they take the time to read and understand this policy. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the Clerk or Chair of the Council.
- 3.4. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Clerk.

4. Using social media sites in the name of the council

- 4.1. Members are not permitted to post material on a social media website in the name of the Council unless authorised to do so by the Clerk acting on behalf of the Council.
- 4.2. If you are not sure about comments you wish to make as individual not on behalf of the Council do not post them until you have checked with the Clerk/Chair.

5. Using social media

5.1. The Council recognises the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about the Council and the support and services it provides to the community. It also recognises the importance of our employees and elected members joining in and helping shape community conversation and direction through interaction in social media.

a) Before using social media on any matter which might affect the interests of the Council you must have read and understood this policy

and

b) Employees must have gained prior written approval to do so from the Clerk.

6. Rules for use of social media

Whenever you are permitted to use social media in accordance with this policy, you must adhere to the following general rules:

- 6.1. Do not upload, post or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.
- 6.2. Any employee/elected member who feel 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 Clerk/Chair.

6.3. Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with the Clerk/Chair.

6.4. Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.

6.5. Before you include a link to a third-party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit you to link to it.

6.6. When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.

6.7. Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the Council.

6.8. You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools.

6.9. Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.

6.10. Don't discuss colleagues without their prior approval.

6.11. Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g., politics and religion. Remember that although it is acceptable to make political points or canvass votes via your own social media accounts this will not be permissible if you are commenting on behalf of the Council.

6.12. 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.

7. Monitoring use of social media websites

7.1. Employees and elected members should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for Council purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken against employees under our Disciplinary Procedure and councillors under the Code of Conduct.

7.2. Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and the Council.

7.3. In particular a serious case of uploading, posting forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will probably amount to gross misconduct/breach of the Code of Conduct (this list is not exhaustive):

a) pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);

- b) a false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;
- c) material which is offensive, obscene, criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the Council our councillors or our employees;
- d) confidential information about the council or anyone else
- e) any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, whether for you or the organisation); or
- f) material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

Any such action will be addressed under the Disciplinary Procedure/Code of Conduct.

7.4. Where evidence of misuse is found the Council may undertake a more detailed investigation involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or managers involved in the investigation. If necessary, such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.

7.5. If you notice any use of social media by other employees/elected members in breach of this policy please report it to the Clerk/Chair *in accordance with the Council's Whistle Blowing Policy*.

8. Monitoring and review of this policy

8.1. The Council shall be responsible for reviewing this policy annually to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

Further information for elected members, published by the Welsh Local Government Association, on the use of social media can be viewed on the One Voice Wales website: -

http://www.onevoicewales.org.uk/OVWWeb/good_practicegeneral-8204.aspx

1. OPENING STATEMENT

The Council has adopted the principle that in the conduct of public business in Wales it will treat Welsh and English on a basis of equality. This scheme sets out how the Council will implement that principle in the provision of services to the public.

The Council recognises that members of the public can express their views and needs better in their preferred language, that enabling them to use their preferred language is a matter of good practice rather than a concession and that the denial of that right could place members of the public at a real disadvantage. The Council will therefore offer the public the right to choose which language to use in dealings with the Council.

The Council aims:

- to enable everyone who receives or uses the Council's services or contributes to the democratic process to do so through the medium of Welsh or English, according to personal choice.
- to encourage the use of the Welsh language in the community
- to encourage others to use the Welsh language in the community.

2. SERVICE PLANNING AND DELIVERY

2.1 New Policies and Initiatives

2.1.1 In devising new policies and initiatives the Council will:

- assess their linguistic effect and ensure that they are consistent with the Welsh Language Scheme.
- promote and facilitate the use of Welsh wherever possible and will move closer to implementing the principle of equality fully at every opportunity.
- consult with the Welsh Language Board in advance regarding proposals that will affect the scheme, or the scheme of any other public body. The scheme will not be altered without the Board's agreement.
- ensure that those involved in formulating policy will be aware of the Scheme, and of the Council's responsibilities under the Welsh Language Act 1993.
- ensure that the measures contained in the Scheme are applied to new policies and initiatives when they are implemented.

2.2 Standards of Quality

2.2.1. Services provided in English or Welsh will be of an equally high standard and equally prompt.

3. DEALING WITH THE WELSH SPEAKING PUBLIC

3.1 Written Communication

3.1.1. The Council will welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

3.1.2. Correspondence through the medium of Welsh will not lead to any delay

3.1.3. Every correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh.

3.1.4. All correspondence following a telephone or face-to-face conversation in Welsh or a meeting where it was established that Welsh is the preferred language of the person, will be in Welsh.

3.1.5 All correspondence with a member of the public will be initiated in his/her preferred language if known.

3.1.6 All circular or standard letters to the public will be bilingual.

3.1.7 The Council will make arrangements to translate correspondence as needed in order to respond to correspondence promptly in the original language.

3.1.8 The Clerk of the Council will be responsible for translating correspondence.

3.1.9 The Council's official headed paper will include a statement in both languages making it clear that correspondence is welcome in either Welsh or English.

3.2 Telephone Calls

3.2.1 The Council will welcome telephone calls in Welsh or English.

3.2.2 If the Clerk is not bilingual, he/she will offer to arrange for a Welsh speaking Council member (if this facility exists) to return the call when a member of the public wishes to speak Welsh, or explain that the individual is welcome to continue with the call in English or send in their enquiry in written form in Welsh.

3.3 Public Meetings organised by or on behalf of the Council[namely meetings the Council arranges with the public, for example, road diversion, improve facilities or annual general meeting. Not the Council's regular meetings where members of the public can attend and listen, but not contribute without prior invitation – see 3.4.]

3.3.1. Any public meeting that is held to discuss the Welsh language, Welsh medium education, Council Tax or any information regarding local elections/by-elections will be bilingual.

3.3.2 All publicity for public meetings will be bilingual, and will invite those attending to notify the Clerk of their language choice in advance so that appropriate translation arrangements can be made.

3.3.3 The Council will provide translation facilities, according to need, for public meetings arranged by or on behalf of the Council.

3.3.4 When the Council is aware that a member of the public wishes to speak Welsh in a public meeting that would otherwise be conducted in English, this should be respected by providing appropriate translation arrangements.

3.3.5 Any written materials such as leaflets or acetates that are used in public meetings about the Welsh language, Welsh medium education, Council Tax or information about local elections/by-elections will be bilingual.

3.4 Council Meetings

[namely the Council's regular meetings, which are open to the public, but where the public are not part of the meeting.]

3.4.1 The notice and agenda for the Council's meetings will be available bilingually on request.

3.4.2 A bilingual version of the minutes will be available to the public on request.

3.4.3 The Council will respond to requests for information in relation to the minutes, or sections of the minutes in the preferred language of the individual.

3.5 Face-to-Face Meetings with the Public

3.5.1 The Council will welcome meetings with the public in either Welsh or English and the Clerk will ensure that appropriate arrangements are made to enable any member of the public who wishes to discuss matters in Welsh to do so with a bilingual officer or Member of the Council where this facility can be made available. If none of the officers or elected member can speak Welsh, the Clerk will politely explain the situation and offer the individual the opportunity to discuss the matter in English or send in their enquiry in written form in Welsh.

3.6 Other Dealings with the Public

3.6.1 When the Council contacts the public via information technology, namely computers, website, e-mail or touch screens, this information will be available in Welsh and English for the public.

4. THE COUNCIL'S PUBLIC FACE

4.1 Corporate Identity

4.1.1 The Council's corporate identity will be bilingual.

4.1.2 The name and address of the Council will appear bilingually on official headed paper, fax papers and compliment slips, and any other promotional material.

4.2 Signage [This guideline is relevant to Council office signs, if an office exists, and any external public signs.]

4.2.1 All new information signs or those replacing previous signs on Council property will be bilingual, as will any other public information signs for which the Council is responsible. The two languages will appear side by side, with the Welsh version appearing to the left. Where this is not practical, the Welsh version will appear first. The size, quality, legibility and prominence of text will be equal in Welsh and English.

4.3 Publishing and Printing Material

4.3.1 All publications aimed at the public, such as documents and explanatory material dealing with the Welsh language, Welsh medium education, Council Tax, information about local elections/by-elections and grant forms will be bilingual with both language versions forming one document. The versions will be printed side-by-side where possible to facilitate easy cross-reference, distribution and offer language choice.

4.3.2. If Welsh and English versions are published separately they will appear simultaneously, be distributed together and be equally accessible.

4.3.3. Press releases dealing with the Welsh language, Welsh medium education, Council Tax, information about local elections/by-elections and grant forms will be bilingual, and will specifically target papurau bro (monthly community papers).

4.3.4. All Advertising and publicity activities will be bilingual.

4.3.5. Council advertisements and notices dealing with the Welsh language, Welsh medium education, Council Tax, information about local elections/by-elections to be placed in the press, on notice boards or any other medium will be bilingual.

4.3.6 Job advertisements will appear in the English language in English publications, apart from when bilingual skills are desirable then the advert will be bilingual. Advertisements will appear in Welsh only in Welsh language publications.

4.4 Statutory and promotional functions

4.4.1 In the information that is sent to those intending to apply for financial assistance towards local activities, the Council will make it clear that there is need for applicants to describe how they intend to reflect the linguistic nature of the community and their audience in the activities for which they require financial support. When considering applications, the Council will ensure that applicants have appropriately reflected the linguistic nature of the community and their audience in their application.

4.4.2 When the Council is consulted on planning applications, the Council will encourage applicants to erect bilingual signs in locations such as offices, businesses and shops and supermarkets by referring to the linguistic nature of the area.

4.4.3 When the Council is consulted on the naming of streets, developments and new estates, the Council will support the use of standard or indigenous names when appropriate. The Council will ask the opinion of the Welsh Place Names Standardisation Panel in any cases of uncertainty.

4.5 Services by Other parties

4.5.1 Any arrangements made by the Council to use a third party to deliver services to the public on its behalf will comply with the specific requirements in the Scheme as outlined by the Council. The Council will outline which relevant measures in the Scheme the third party will have to adhere to within the tendering or contract specifications.

4.5.2 The Third party will need to confirm that it has complied with the relevant aspects of the Scheme by letter.

5. IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING THE SCHEME

5.1 Staffing

5.1.1 When the position of Clerk to the Council becomes vacant it will be noted in the advert that bilingual skills are desirable for the post to ensure that the Council can implement the clauses contained in this Scheme.

5.2 Administrative Arrangements

5.2.1 This scheme has the full support of the Council.

5.2.2 The Clerk will be responsible for implementing the Scheme on a day-to-day basis within the Council.

5.3 The Translation Service

5.3.1 The Clerk will be responsible for the written translation needs of the Council, and will also be responsible for the standard of all Welsh text produced.

5.3.2 If the Clerk cannot complete the work within the timescale, the Council will employ an external translator.

5.3.3 The Clerk will be responsible for arranging simultaneous translation facilities for all the Council's needs.

5.3.4 When needed, this facility will be available for all public meetings arranged by or on behalf of the Council, and in any other Council meeting if that is the decision of the Council.

5.4 Monitoring

5.4.1 Responsibility for monitoring the Scheme will rest with the Clerk of the Council.

5.4.2 The Council will receive a brief annual report on implementing the Scheme that will be displayed locally (the local press, local information boards, papurau bro etc) with a copy being sent to the Welsh Language Board. Also the Council will invite local residents to offer their views on the service and how it could be improved, by placing a copy of the Report in a public place.

5.4.3. The Report will deal with every aspect of the Scheme.

5.4.4. The Council will welcome suggestions from the public (by letter or telephone communication) regarding improvements to any aspect of the Scheme.

5.5 Publicity

5.5.1. The Council will publicise the Scheme regularly through the local press and/or on its notice boards.

5.6 Contacting the Council

5.6.1 Any comments, complaints or suggestions regarding the Scheme should be addressed to the Clerk of the Council.