

COUNCIL POLICY

Council Policy Title:	Social Media Policy
Council Policy ref. no:	2.7
Responsible Department:	Executive
Date of adoption/review:	26 February 2014

1. Policy statement

Council is committed to engaging with the community and recognises that social media affords Council another avenue to communicate. Social media can complement Council's existing communication methods and further improve information, access and delivery of key services.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide understanding and guidance for the appropriate use of social media platforms and tools by users for the purpose of conducting Council business.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all councillors, employees, contractors, agents and volunteers of Colac Otway Shire Council who use social media in relation to their involvement with Council.

This policy will also apply to agencies and individuals who provide services to Council and will be included in all relevant external supplier contracts.

The policy outlines requirements for compliance with confidentiality, governance, legal, privacy and regulatory parameters when using social media to conduct council business. It aims to:

- Inform appropriate use of social media tools for Colac Otway Shire Council
- Promote effective and productive community engagement through social media
- Minimise miscommunication or mischievous communications
- Help Council manage the inherent challenges of speed and immediacy

The policy applies to those digital spaces where people may comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content, including:

- Blogs
- Bulletin boards
- Citizen journalism and news sites
- Forums and discussion boards
- Instant messaging facilities
- Microblogging sites (e.g. Twitter)

- Online encyclopaedias (e.g. Wikipedia)
- Podcasts
- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, Bebo, Friendster, LinkedIn)
- Video and photo sharing sites (e.g. Flickr, YouTube)
- Video podcasts
- Wikis
- Any other websites that allow individuals to use simple publishing tools or new technologies emerging from the digital environment.

As it is not possible to list all specific sites or kinds of social media outlets, the absence of a reference to a particular site or kind of social media activity does not limit the application of this policy.

This policy is not intended to cover personal use of social media where:

- the author publishes information in their personal capacity and not on behalf of, or in association with Colac Otway Shire Council, and
- no reference or inference is made to Council, its councillors, staff, policies and services, suppliers or other stakeholders or council related issues.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies and procedures of Colac Otway Shire Council.

4. Legislative and Policy Framework

Councillors and staff of Colac Otway Shire Council are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and policies. A list of relevant legislation and documents which may be used as a guide is included in at point 8.

5. Using Social Media

When engaging with social media Users are expected to:

- Adhere to Colac Otway Shire Council codes of conduct, policies and procedures
- Behave with caution, courtesy, honesty and respect
- Comply with relevant laws and regulations
- Reinforce the values of Colac Otway Shire Council.

The following content is not permitted on Council's social media sites at any time:

- Abusive, profane or sexual language
- Content which is false or misleading
- Confidential information about Council or third parties
- Copyright or Trademark protected materials
- Discriminatory material in relation to a person or group based on age, colour, creed, disability, family status, gender, nationality, marital status, parental status, political opinion/affiliation, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, race or social origin, religious beliefs/activity, responsibilities, sex or sexual orientation
- Illegal material or materials designed to encourage law breaking
- Material that could compromise council, employee or system safety
- Material which would breach applicable laws (defamation, privacy, trade practices, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks)
- Material which would bring the council into disrepute

- Personal details or references to councillors, council staff or third parties, which may breach privacy laws
- Spam, meaning the distribution of unsolicited bulk electronic messages
- Statements which may be considered to be bullying or harassment

Further guidelines for Councillors

Councillors must comply with the Council Code of Conduct when using social media related to the Colac Otway Shire Council.

Further guidelines for staff, and other Users identified in this Policy excepting Councillors

Authorisation

Ensure appropriate authorisation has been obtained before using social media including but not limited to uploading content and acting as a spokesperson on behalf of Council.

Expertise

Do not comment outside your area of expertise. Do not commit Council to actions or undertakings.

Disclosure

Only discuss publicly available information. Do not disclose confidential information, internal discussions or decisions of Council, employees or third parties. This includes publishing confidential, personal or private information where there is sufficient detail for potential identification of councillors, Council staff or third parties.

Accuracy

Be accurate, constructive, helpful and informative. Correct any errors as soon as practicable. Do not publish information or make statements which you know to be false or may reasonably be taken to be misleading or deceptive.

Identity

Be clear about professional identity or any vested interests. Do not use fictitious names or identities that deliberately intend to deceive, mislead or lie. Do not participate anonymously or covertly via a third party or agency.

Opinion

Clearly separate personal opinions from professional ones and be mindful of Council's Employee Code of Conduct when discussing or commenting on council matters. In general, don't express personal opinions using Council # tags or other identifications. Only where this is not possible, consider using a formal disclaimer to separate official council positions from personal opinions and distance council from comments made by public and other outside interests.

Privacy

Be sensitive to the privacy of others. Seek permission from anyone who appears in any photographs, video or other footage before sharing these via any form of social media. If asked to remove materials do so as soon as practicable. Ensure you comply with all laws and regulations relating to privacy.

Intellectual Property

Seek permission from the creator or copyright owner, to use or reproduce copyright material including applications, audio tracks (speeches, songs), footage (video), graphics (graphs,

charts and logos), images, artwork, photographs, publications or music. Also seek permission before publishing or uploading material in which the intellectual property rights, such as Trademarks, are owned by a third party e.g. company logos. Seek permission from the website's owner wherever possible before linking to another site (including a social media application).

Defamation

Do not comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload or share content that is malicious or defamatory. This includes statements which may negatively impact the reputation of another.

Reward

Do not publish content in exchange for reward of any kind.

Transparency

Do not seek to buy or recompense favourable social media commentary. Encourage online publishers to be open and transparent in how they engage with, or review council personnel, services or wares.

Political bias

Do not endorse any political affinity or allegiance when using social media on behalf of Council.

Respect

Always be courteous, patient and respectful of others' opinions, including detractors.

Discrimination

Be mindful of anti-discrimination laws and do not publish statements or information which may be discriminatory.

Language

Be mindful of language and expression.

State of Mind

Do not use social media if inebriated, irritated, upset or tired.

Be safe

Protect your personal privacy and guard against identity theft.

Media

Do not issue statements or make announcements through social media channels unless authorised. Do not respond directly if approached by media for comment through social media. Refer the inquiry to the Public Relations Unit as per Council's media policy.

Modification and moderation

Ensure that any social media sites created or contributed to can be readily edited, improved or removed and appropriately moderated.

Access

Be mindful of the requisite government web standards for accessibility. Information made available via non-compliant platforms should be made accessible in another form where practical.

Be responsive

Specify the type of comments and feedback that will receive a response and clearly

communicate a target response time. Make it easy for audiences to reach Council via other methods by publishing Council's phone number, generic email, Facebook, Skype and Twitter accounts.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Social Media use complies with the Councillor Code of Conduct • Do not use Council branding unless given prior authorisation from the Mayor and Public Relations Unit • Understand and comply with relevant provisions in this policy • Seek training and development if required • Seek advice from the Mayor if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy
Staff and contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek approval from relevant manager for business strategy incorporating social media • Seek authorisation from the Public Relations Unit on using social media and developing a communications plan to support business strategy • Seek approval for council branding of social media • Register social media account/tools/site with the Public Relations Unit • Seek training and development for using social media • Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy • Maintain records of email addresses, comments, 'friends', followers and printed copies or electronic 'screen grabs' when using externally hosted sites to the extent practicable • Seek advice from the Legal or Public Relations Unit if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy • Ensure contractors are provided with a copy of this policy • Familiarise self with the End User Licence Agreements of any external social media tools being used
Unit Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve business strategy incorporating use of social media • Ensure staff obtain authorisation from the Public Relations Unit on their planned use of social media • Ensure contractors are provided with a copy of the social media policy • Offer training for staff using social media • Advise Information Services of approval to access social media for business purposes
Information Services Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate secure access to support delivery of council business via social media • Regularly back up and archive internally hosted social media sites
Public Relations Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorise use of social media tools for conducting Council business • Provide advice and assist with the development of communication plans using social media • Educate councillors, staff and contractors about this policy and their responsibilities when using social media • Advise appropriate precautions eg disclaimers • Maintain a register of social media being used for conducting Council business including records of the business case for using social media, its strategic imperative, the intended administrator, URL, login, password and audience • Assist staff to retain some record explaining the context or purpose of social media, and a sample of posts where it is impractical to retain large volumes of screen grabs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor social media accounts/tools/sites registered for conducting Council business• Monitor social media for references to the Colac Otway Shire Council• Seek legal advice as appropriate where an issue is likely to be contentious or may create legal risk for Council.
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7. Enforcement

All content published or communicated by or on behalf of Colac Otway Shire Council using social media must be recorded (including the author's name, date, time and media site location) and kept on record.

Colac Otway Shire Council actively monitors social media for relevant contributions that impact on the municipality, its operations and reputation. Council will be able to find – and act upon – contributions made by councillors and staff if deemed necessary.

This policy will be published and promoted to councillors and staff of Council. Breaching this policy may result in disciplinary action, performance management and review. Serious breaches may result in suspension or termination of employment or association.

Colac Otway Shire Council reserves the right to remove, where possible, content that violates this policy or any associated policies.

8. References

Policies and Guidelines

Council policies and guideline provisions which must be adhered to in relation to the use of social media include the following:

RM-01 Occupational Health & Safety Manual
RM-05 Working from Home Policy

HR-10 Disciplinary Procedure
HR-12 Unacceptable Workplace Behaviour Policy

OD-03 Employee Code of Conduct

C-01 Media Relations Policy
C-02 Web Content Policy
C-03 Photographic Use Policy

IS-01 Information Systems and Security policy and procedures
IS-03 Information Management Policy
IS-04 Smart Phone and Tablet Usage
IS-05 Smart Phone and Tablet Usage guidelines

Public Records Office Victorian Local Government Records - General Records
Authority 2002
Councillor Code of Conduct

Social Media Response Guide for Staff
Social Media procedure
Social Media Response Guide for Councillors
Social Media response guide for responding to comments and opinions

Relevant Legislation

- *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth)
- *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic)
- *Defamation Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Fair Trading Act 1999* (Vic)
- *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth)
- *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Vic)
- *Local Government Act 1989* (Vic)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth)
- *Information Privacy Act 2000* (Vic)
- *Spam Act 2003* (Cth)
- *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)
- *Public Records Act 1973* (Vic)
- *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* (Vic)
- *Wrongs Act 1958* (Vic)

ADOPTED/AMENDMENT OF POLICY

Reviewed Date	Reason for Amendment
26 February 2014	Adopted by Council