

SEALAND COMMUNITY COUNCIL
PRESS AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Responses to the press relating to matters discussed by the Community Council shall be dealt with in the first instance by the Clerk.

The Community Council Chair and in their absence the Vice-chair, are also authorised to give the views of the Council to the press on any non-confidential subject discussed by Council.

Whenever possible any information given to the press shall be given in writing so as not to leave interpretation open to misunderstanding and misreporting. At no time shall the personal views of either members or officers of the Council be given to the press in a way which could be interpreted as a view of the Council as a whole.

Rules for use of social media

With regard to social media at no time shall the personal views of either members or officers of the Council be published in social media in a way which could be interpreted as a view of the Council as a whole.

- 1.1. Do not upload, post or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.
- 1.2. 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.
- 1.3. 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.
- 1.4. Do not up load, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.
- 1.5. 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.
- 1.6. When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.
- 1.7. Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the Council.
- 1.8. You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools.
- 1.9. Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.
- 1.10. Don't discuss colleagues without their prior approval.
- 1.11. 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.

- 1.12. Do not publish anyone else's contact details unless specifically requested by that individual to do so on their behalf.

Monitoring use of social media websites

Where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken against councillors under the Code of Conduct.

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.

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.

Whilst the above list is not exhaustive it does highlight some of the more obvious issues

Monitoring and review of this policy

For further clarification contact the Clerk of the Council.

This Policy was approved by Council at its meeting held on 20th June 2022 and will be reviewed annually.

Peter Richmond - Clerk of the Council – 21st June 2022