

SEALAND COMMUNITY COUNCIL
PRESS AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance to the Council in its engagement with the Press and Media, ensuring communications are managed effectively to support the Council's efficient operation.

All Councillors and Officers must comply with relevant UK and Welsh legislation, including the Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR, Equality Act 2010, Defamation Act 2013, Communications Act 2003, and the Model Code of Conduct for Wales 2021.

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. In addition, County council members may represent the Council only when expressly authorised by a resolution of the 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.

When speaking or providing written material to the Press and Media, Members should make clear the capacity, in which they are providing the information.

For example: -

- as Chairperson
- as an individual (i.e. letter to press for publication)

Never use the prefix "Councillor" when writing to the press as an individual. This implies you are stating Council policy. A copy of any written material sent to the Press and Media by a Member, as representing the Council, must be forwarded to the Clerk.

Councillors should be aware that case law states that the role of Councillor overrides the rights to act as an individual. This means that Councillors should be careful about expressing individual views to the press or media, whether or not they relate to matters of Council business. Councillors also have an obligation to respect Council policy once made and whilst it may be legitimate for a Councillor to make clear that they disagreed with a policy and voted against it (if this took place in an open session), they should not seek to undermine a decision through the press.

Rules for use of social media

Concerning social media, at no time shall the personal views of either members or officers of the Council be published on 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 a difference in people's perceptions of the Council.
 - 1.8. You are personally responsible for the content you publish on 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 media accounts, this will not be permissible if you are commenting on On behalf of the Council.
 - 1.12. Do not publish anyone else's contact details unless specifically requested by that person.
Individuals to do so on their behalf.
 - 1.13. Be aware of cybersecurity risks, including phishing, impersonation, and hacking. Always verify links and attachments before sharing or posting.

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.

The overriding principle of this policy is that all elements of the Press and Media will be treated equally.

This Policy was approved by Council at its meeting held on 20th October 2025 and will be reviewed annually.

Ashley Griffiths - Clerk of the Council – 20 October 2025