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 social media, ensuring that communications are managed accurately to support the Council's efficient operation.

All Councillors and Officers must comply with applicable legislation and relevant Council policies, including the UK General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act 2018, Equality Act 2010, Defamation Act 2013, Copyright, The Communications Act 2003, Designs and Patents Act 1988, and the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council.

Responses to the press relating to matters discussed by the Community Council shall normally be coordinated by the Clerk.

The Chair and, in their absence, the Vice-Chair, may communicate the Council's agreed position to the press. Other Members may represent the Council only when expressly authorised to do so by the Council or under an applicable delegation. The Clerk may provide factual information about Council business within the Clerk's authority.

Whenever practicable, information given to the press on behalf of the Council shall be provided in writing to reduce the risk of misunderstanding or misreporting. Personal views must not be presented as the official position of the Council.

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 Chair of the Council, when authorised to communicate the Council's agreed position.
- As an individual expressing a personal opinion.

When expressing personal views, Members must not imply that those views have been authorised or endorsed by the Council. The use of the title 'Councillor' does not, in itself, mean that a statement represents Council policy.

Members must comply with the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council and must not disclose confidential information. Members may explain that they disagreed with a Council decision and, where appropriate, that they voted against it, provided that any such statement is accurate and does not misrepresent the Council's decision.

A copy of any written material issued to the press by a Member representing the Council shall be forwarded to the Clerk for the Council's records.

Rules for use of social media

The personal views of Members and Officers must not be presented as the official views of the Council. Members and Officers must distinguish between personal communications and communications made on behalf of the Council.

The following rules apply when using social media in connection with Council business or where communications may reasonably be understood as relating to a member's or Officer's Council role.

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 feels 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 upload, 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

Members are responsible for ensuring that their conduct complies with the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council. Alleged breaches may be referred to the appropriate standards authority or dealt with through the applicable complaints and standards arrangements.

The Council does not routinely monitor Members' personal social media accounts. However, specific concerns relating to this policy may be considered where appropriate.

Misuse of social media may, depending on the circumstances, constitute a criminal offence, give rise to civil liability or result in a breach of the Code of Conduct or applicable employment requirements.

Examples of conduct that may give rise to serious concerns include, but are not limited to:

Monitoring and review of this policy

a) pornographic material or otherwise unlawful material
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.

While the above list is not exhaustive, it highlights 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

and will be reviewed annually.

Ashley Griffiths - Clerk of the Council – 19 October 2026