

## SOCIAL MEDIA FOR COUNCILLORS POLICY

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### **Policy Statement**

Social media has embedded itself into the daily life of our community as their first 'port of call' for information and instantaneous engagement with the Town.

This policy – while still allowing for freedom of speech – primarily seeks to ensure that that comments, likes, posts and the use of all forms of online and social media by councillors are professional, respectful, impartial and apolitical.

The impartial, constructive and strategic use of social media by Town councillors will greatly improve collaboration and engagement with our community; which will, in turn, enhance and protect the Town's reputation.

### **Policy Details**

The Town's Social Media for Councillors Policy seeks to:

Provide guidance and direction for the use of social media by councillors to meet the expectations of the community and their professional requirements; particularly when engaging with the community through their respective personal and professional social media accounts.

### **Policy Principles**

The community and the public in general are entitled to expect that the following general principles, regulation 3(1)(a)-(h) of the Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007, will be used to guide councillors in their behaviours:

- a) act with reasonable care and diligence; and
- b) act with honesty and integrity; and
- c) act lawfully; and
- d) avoid damage to the reputation of the local government; and
- e) be open and accountable to the public; and
- f) base decisions on relevant and factually correct information; and
- g) treat others – including fellow councillors – with respect and fairness; and
- h) not be impaired by mind-affecting substances.

Furthermore, councillors must not use their social media presence to adversely affect their standing as a public official or which could bring themselves or the Town into disrepute.

The nature of social media increases the risk of reputational damage through activities such as:

- posting images, information or links to images or information;
- disclosing one's own and others' personal information;
- engaging in a heated debate or argument.

### **Guidelines:**

The following information guides councillors in the preparation of social media content and responses on all private and public social media platforms:

- Remember the Mayor is the official spokespersons for the Town of Mosman Park. Any statements on behalf of the Council should only be made with specific authority from the Mayor.
- Ensure content is accurate, relevant and complies with current policies.
- Do not use offensive, defamatory, intimidating and provocative language, and avoid commenting on or liking posts that contain this type of language.
- Do not make personal comments (including personal attacks) about other councillors, staff or members of the community.
- Do not make any comments that may have adverse effect on Council decisions.
- Always maintain a respectful disposition with consideration to your tone and language. Online interactions can be easily misinterpreted.
- Adhere to copyright, privacy, defamation, discrimination, harassment and other applicable laws.
- Observe confidentiality when necessary, particularly with regards to Council business or decisions.
- Remember Council decision making is by majority, and whilst there may be decisions that are disagreed with, alternative points of view communicated publicly online should be made respectfully and constructively – or, avoided altogether.
- Where requests for service or complaints has been posted online by residents or the community, councillors are to respond by encouraging direct contact with Town Administration to enable the matter to be dealt with effectively.
- Where misinformation or factually incorrect information is posted online, councillors are to encourage the original poster to make contact with Town Administration for clarification.
- Liking, sharing or reacting to a post on social media is generally taken to be an endorsement of that material, as if you had created it yourself, and may be seen by a wider audience than intended. Councillors should use their discretion and judgement before endorsing any online posts.
- If councillors have the authority to communicate their personal views on any topic in the public domain, they are to state (either in their social media profile or within their social media post) that their comment/s are their own personal opinion, and not those of Council.

## Definitions

**Social Media** includes:

- Town-owned and moderated social media channels including Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram
- Community-run social media pages including (but not limited to) community Facebook groups and closed discussion boards.
- Other online platforms including personal websites, blogs, intranets, and forums.

**Town** encompasses:

- All staff, including councillors

## Governance References

Statutory Compliance	<i>Section 2.29 of the Local Government Act 1995 Regulation 3(1)(a)-(h) of the Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007 Model Code of Conduct</i>
Organisational Compliance	

## Policy Administration

Directorate:		Officer title:
Office of the CEO		Marketing & Communications Advisor
Next Review		Review Cycle
2022		Every year
Version	Date	Ref
1	25 May 2021	OCM-077-2021
2		
3		