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**NAME OF POLICY:** Social Media Policy

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**POLICY MANUAL:** Governance

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## BACKGROUND

Social media allows online communities with common interests to connect, share and consume information, thoughts and ideas. The Council recognises the opportunities that social media presents to engage in meaningful, two-way communication with a broad audience of residents, ratepayers, businesses, community groups and other organisations.

Social media can both complement and enhance traditional communication, customer service and consultation methods used by the Council, and further improve access to and delivery of key services. Through use of social media, the Council aims to keep its local community well-informed and to ensure that citizens understand the extensive role that the Council plays in the community.

This Policy provides guidance for Elected Members and Council staff, Volunteers and contractors regarding the appropriate use of social media platforms and tools (whether authorised Council platforms or personal accounts) for the purpose of conducting Council business.

## KEY PRINCIPLES

The key principles of this Policy are to:

- provide guidance about appropriate and responsible use of social media platforms (whether authorised Council platforms or personal accounts);
- reduce the likelihood of miscommunication or inappropriate communications;
- promote effective and valuable community engagement through social media;
- assist with the management of challenges associated with social media such as timeliness, record keeping, privacy and security; and
- provide clarity about roles and responsibilities in relation to use, approval and monitoring.

## SCOPE

This Policy applies to all Elected Members, Council staff, Volunteers and contractors engaged by the Council who:

- are authorised to use the Council's social media platforms;
- who use personal social media accounts for the purpose of conducting Council business; or
- who publish information on personal social media accounts which relates in any way to the Council or its business,

and to agencies and individuals who provide services to the Council (where relevant).

This Policy applies to all current and future social media platforms and tools. That is, digital spaces where people comment, view, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content, including (without limitation):

- social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn);
- microblogging sites (e.g. Twitter), podcasts, video podcasts, video and photo sharing sites (e.g. Flickr, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram);
- online encyclopaedias (e.g. Wikipedia);
- online collaboration platforms (e.g. Yammer, Wiki); and
- any other websites which allow individuals to use simple publishing tools or new technologies emerging from the digital environment.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies and procedures of the Council, including:

- Code of Conduct for Council Members;
- Behaviour Standards Policy & Code of Conduct for Council Employees;
- Community Consultation Policy;
- Community Information Policy;
- Complaints Handling Policy;
- Elected Member Electronic Communications Policy & Guidelines;
- Records Disposal Policy.

This Policy does not limit the application of relevant legislation, including (without limitation), the *Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)*, *Defamation Act 2005*, *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*, *Freedom of Information Act 1991*, *Local Government Act 1999*, *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*, *Spam Act 2003 (Cth)* and *State Records Act 1997*.

In particular, Elected Members must ensure compliance at all times with the obligations set out in Section 62 of the *Local Government Act 1999* and the Code of Conduct for Council Members, when using social media platforms and tools, including the obligation to:

- at all times act honestly and with reasonable care and diligence in the performance and discharge of official functions and duties;
- not make improper use of information or position to gain an advantage for themselves or another person or to cause detriment of the Council; and
- not disclose information or a document in relation to which there is an order of a Council or Committee in effect under Section 90 of the Act.

## **POLICY**

### **Approval**

The establishment of new Council social media accounts must be approved by the General Manager, Governance & Civic Affairs. Approval of new social media accounts will involve consideration of the identified business objective of the account, the audience, the proposed use, alignment with the Council's corporate branding and style guidelines and resourcing requirements.

Council staff, Volunteers or contractors engaged by the Council seeking to incorporate usage of the Council's social media platforms into a business strategy in relation to a particular project or service of the Council, must seek approval from General Manager, Governance & Civic Affairs in accordance with Council guidelines.

## Access

Access to the Council's social media platforms by Council staff, Volunteers and contractors that are engaged by the Council (including for content creation, responding to queries, monitoring, account maintenance and security), will be authorised and managed in accordance with Council guidelines.

Access will be determined by the Coordinator, Events and Marketing in consultation with the General Manager, Governance & Civic Affairs and conditions of access may be modified at any time (including authorisation of access by additional staff, Volunteers or contractors engaged by the Council, as required from time-to-time).

Elected Members will not be authorised to access or use the Council's authorised social media platforms to conduct Council-related business (this excludes the publication of information relating to the Elected Members by Council staff, Volunteers or contractors that are engaged by the Council).

Elected Members, Council staff, Volunteers and contractors that are engaged by the Council, are encouraged to publish content (including, eg, images, videos, stories and text) relating to Council or community events on their personal social media accounts (including, for example, tagging the Council, using event hashtags or location tags) to promote the Council and its activities, or to provide this content to the Coordinator, Events and Marketing for potential use on the Council's social media channels, provided content is published in accordance with this Policy.

## Content

In publishing content on the Council's social media platforms, the following principles will be followed:

- content will be relevant, timely and engaging to the Council's audience;
- content will promote and provide information about new and existing Council services, programs and facilities, along with special events and initiatives, and the City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters more broadly;
- content will be accessible and understandable and will promote a safe and inclusive environment in which to connect, share and consume information (where possible, information published on social media platforms will also be made available in another format – eg on the Council's website, or in hard copy from the Norwood Town Hall); and
- the type of content published on different social media platforms will be responsive in order to meet changing audience expectations and best practice communications and marketing strategy for that particular platform (as this changes over time).

## Usage

The Council encourages appropriate and professional use of social media platforms to aid the efficient and effective conduct of Council business. In using social media platforms (whether authorised Council platforms or personal accounts), Elected Members, Council staff, Volunteers and contractors engaged by the Council are expected to comply with the following principles at all times:

### Communication and Expression

- Be courteous, patient and respectful of others' opinions.
- Use your own voice, but be mindful of language and expression.
- Don't make statements or engage with, share or upload content that is malicious, defamatory or may negatively impact the reputation of another person or organisation (including the Council, Elected Members, Council staff, Volunteers or contractors engaged by the Council).
- Be mindful of anti-discrimination laws and do not publish statements or information which may be discriminatory.
- Encourage open, honest and transparent engagement and feedback from the "online community".
- Do not use social media when inebriated, irritated, upset or tired.

## Accuracy and Transparency

- Only publish content and statements that are accurate, clear and not likely to mislead or deceive.
- Only comment about matters within your area of expertise.
- Be constructive and informative, and correct any errors as soon as possible.
- Be clear about your professional identity and any vested interests, and refrain from covert, anonymous or deceitful representation including through a third party.

## Confidentiality and Privacy

- Only disclose publicly available information.
- Do not disclose confidential information, internal discussions or Council decisions, or other material obtained in your role at the Council that you know (or ought reasonably to know) to be confidential or commercially sensitive information.
- Do not disclose personal or private information about Elected Members, Council staff, Volunteers or contractors, or third parties (including, eg, personal contact details and addresses).
- Seek permission from anyone who appears in any photographs, video or other footage before publishing such content, and if asked to remove the content, do so as soon as practical.
- Only use or reproduce copyright material, or the intellectual property of others (including, eg, applications, sound recordings (speeches, songs), footage (video), graphics (graphs, charts and logos), images, artwork, photographs, publications or music) if you have permission from the creator or owner, and otherwise in accordance with any relevant legislative requirements.
- Protect your personal privacy and guard against identity theft.

## Personal vs Council Business

- Unless authorised to publish content on behalf of the Council, do not hold yourself out as speaking on behalf of the Council or representing the Council's position on a particular matter.

\*Note: the Mayor is the official spokesperson of the Council.

- Avoid expressing personal opinions in relation to Council decisions or Council business, and do not make disparaging comments in relation to Council decisions or Council business (including in relation to Elected Members or Council staff, Volunteers or contractors).

\*Note: Clause 2.5 of the Code of Conduct for Council Members provides that Elected Members must: *ensure that personal comments to the media, or other public comments on Council decisions and other matters, clearly indicate that it is a private view, and not that of the Council.*

However, be mindful that in some circumstances, such a statement may not be sufficient, depending on the nature of the matter being discussed and your involvement in that matter.

- Clearly identify any comments made in relation to the Council or Council business as your private view on a particular matter, and not that of the Council.

\*Note: Clause 2.5 of the Code of Conduct for Council Members provides that Elected Members must: *ensure that personal comments to the media, or other public comments on Council decisions and other matters, clearly indicate that it is a private view, and not that of the Council.*

However, be mindful that in some circumstances, such a statement may not be sufficient, depending on the nature of the matter being discussed and your involvement in that matter.

- Refrain from making statements that commit you to a particular position or indicate that you will act in a certain manner in relation to Council business or a matter before the Council for consideration.

\*Note: This may give rise to a conflict of interest under the *Local Government Act 1999*.

- Refrain from behaviour which could be viewed as biased, showing undue favour or acting in a manner so as to obtain a benefit, or avoid a loss of some kind (whether pecuniary or otherwise).

\*Note: This may give rise to a conflict of interest under the *Local Government Act 1999*.

## Monitoring and Responding to Content

The Council's social media platforms will be regularly monitored and maintained by authorised staff in order to:

- ensure appropriate usage by Elected Members, Council staff, Volunteers and contractors engaged by the Council, and third parties (and identify and remove content that breaches this Policy or other Council policies);
- respond to enquiries and complaints made by third parties;
- monitor community response and feedback to content that is published; and
- identify issues circulating in the community that relate to the business or reputation of the Council or Local Government more broadly.

Responses to content posted on the Council's social media platforms (including, eg, complaints, general enquiries, and neutral comments) will be timely and will be conducted in accordance with Council guidelines and procedures. Media enquiries received through social media or posts about potentially sensitive or political issues will be referred to the Council's Communications Officer for a response.

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

- abusive, profane or sexual language;
- discriminatory material (including in relation to a person or group based on age, colour, creed, disability, family status, gender identity, nationality, marital status, parental status, political opinion/affiliation, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, race or social origin, religious beliefs/activity, responsibilities, sex or sexual orientation);
- statements which may be considered to be bullying or harassment;
- illegal material or materials designed to encourage law breaking;
- materials that could compromise safety of the Council, its systems, Elected Members, Council staff, Volunteers or contractors engaged by the Council;
- materials which would breach applicable laws (including, eg, defamation, privacy, trade practices, copyright, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks);
- confidential or commercially sensitive information in relation to the Council, Elected Members, Council staff, Volunteers or contractors engaged by the Council, third parties, or Council-related matters;
- material which would offend contemporary standards of taste and decency;
- material which would bring the Council or its Elected Members, staff, Volunteers or contractors engaged by the Council into disrepute;
- personal information or references to Elected Members, Council staff, Volunteers or contractors, or third parties, which may be inconsistent with Council's Privacy Policy;
- spam (including, eg, advertisements or endorsements) or unsolicited bulk electronic messages; or
- any other content deemed to be inappropriate for publication on the Council's social media platforms, at the Council's discretion in all respects.

Any such content that is identified on the Council's social media platforms, will be formally recorded and may be removed from the platform, and further action may be taken against the individual or entity responsible for publishing the content at the Council's discretion (including, eg, blocking users, or pursuing disciplinary action against Council staff).

If Elected Members or Council staff, Volunteers or contractors engaged by the Council, or third parties, become aware of any content that breaches the above criteria, they should report the content to the Coordinator, Events and Marketing and include a link or reference to the offending material.

## **Security**

The Coordinator, Events and Marketing will be responsible for general account maintenance and security (including password management in accordance with Council guidelines), to protect against unauthorised use of the Council's social media platforms.

Access to social media platforms on electronic communication devices supplied by the Council (including, eg, the Council's computer network, mobile phones and iPads) is monitored by the Council. Any breaches of this Policy or other relevant policies may result in disciplinary processes being implemented against the Elected Member, staff member, Volunteer or contractor engaged by the Council, and/or reasonable steps being taken to restrict or remove access to the electronic communication device/s.

## **Record Keeping**

To ensure the Council is complying with its legislative responsibilities, social media records and archiving including (but not limited to) posts, public and private messages and, comments which are made by members of the public, Elected Members and Staff on Council owned platforms, are maintained in accordance with the *State Records Act 1997*.

Formal records relating to use of the Council's social media platforms will be kept and maintained in accordance with the Council's *Records Disposal Policy*, internal Council guidelines and relevant requirements under the *State Records Act 1997* (as amended from time-to-time).

## **Evaluation and Continuous Improvement**

Use of the Council's social media platforms will be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure that they are achieving business objectives, are in line with best practice for the social media industry and to seek opportunities for further improvement. This may include review of qualitative data (eg feedback and comments from Council staff, Volunteers and contractors engaged by the Council) and quantitative data (eg the number of likes, reach, audience demographics, number of comments, or number of click-throughs to the Council's website).

## **REVIEW PROCESS**

The Council will review this Policy within three (3) years of the adoption date of the Policy.

## **INFORMATION**

The contact officer for further information at the City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters is the Council's Coordinator, Events and Marketing, telephone 8366 4582.

## **ADOPTION OF THE POLICY**

This Policy was adopted by the Council on 5 August 2019.  
This Policy was reviewed by the Council on 8 October 2019.  
This Policy was reviewed by the Council on 1 August 2022.

## **TO BE REVIEWED**

August 2025