SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1.0	**Introduction**
1.1	Social media is an important communications channel, building relationships and broadening access to the services we provide. This policy will set out a process for the limited and authorised use of social media and guidelines for how it can be managed effectively. We want to continually improve how we communicate and interact with the residents and communities we serve by making the best use of available technology. By developing our use of social media we are responding to customer demand. A growing number of our residents use social media and expect to engage with us in this way.
1.2	The Council's reputation is closely linked to the behaviour of its employees, and everything published reflects on how the Council is perceived. Social media should be used in a way that adds value to the Council's business; i.e. solving problems; enhancing the Council's services, processes and policies; creating a sense of community; or helping to promote the Council's aims and values.
1.3	The policy aims to provide a structured approach to using social media. It will ensure that use of social media is effective, lawful, does not compromise our information or computer systems/networks and that our reputation is not adversely affected.
1.4	The Social Media Guidelines (Appendix 1) will help account holders and users to get the best out of the tools available whilst maintaining a professional environment and protecting themselves and the council.
1.5	This policy applies to all managers, employees and other workers who are granted access to the council's social media channels.

Version Control

Version Number	Date	Review Date	Author	Reason for New Version
				New policy

2.0	**Definition**
2.1	**Social Media** Social media is the term used for online tools, websites and interactive media that enable users to interact with each other through sharing information, ideas, opinions, knowledge, pictures/videos and interests. It involves building online communities or networks which encourage participation, dialogue and involvement. This includes online social forums such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Myspace and YouTube.
2.2	Only those employees who have been authorised to use business social media accounts should do so and only from EBC provided equipment.
3.0	**Scope**
3.1	This policy is designed to cover Eastbourne Borough Council's use of social media where the content, information, or services are being provided by the Council.
3.2	It also extends to participation on social media sites not managed by the Council where: • Contributions are posted directly in a professional capacity (such as contributing to a professional forum) • a contribution is by someone who identifies themselves as an employee or any other person working on the Council's behalf
4.0	**Approval of new channels**
4.1	The creation of all new social media channels must be agreed and approved by the Senior Head of Corporate Development and Governance in conjunction with Human Resources.
4.2	Service managers may request approval of a new social media channel account by completion of an 'Application to open a social media account', outlining the business case.
5.0	**Approved business social media users**
5.1	There will be roles identified where the post holder will be approved to open and close social media accounts and these employees will be advised by their manager.
4.4	A central record of approved business social media account holders and users will be maintained. The record will detail the roles, post holders, and the specific accounts which account holders and users can access.

5.0	**Professional use of social media**
5.1	'Professional use' is when you use social media for council business. This includes posting onto professional sites/groups/ pages/forums as an individual employee who is a member of those forums.
5.2	All EBC social media accounts should only be used for business of the authority and not for private use.
5.3	When contributing to the council's social media activities, whether an EBC account or professional forum, you are reminded that you represent Eastbourne Borough Council. We expect you to exercise personal responsibility whenever you participate in social media.
5.4	There are certain responsibilities, standards of behaviour and other organisational considerations which apply. As the public face of the council approved users should participate in the same way as you would with other methods of communication such as face-to-face, via the telephone, by email or public meetings.
5.4	Communications must be appropriate in tone and respectful. Do not use offensive or discriminatory language or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace.
5.5	Common sense and good judgment must be used when posting or sharing material and there are particular requirements to follow when sharing images. Taking part should be honest, straightforward and respectful. This includes avoiding breaching anybody's trust or human rights, being sure that you are presenting accurate information and ensuring nobody is misled. If not, consequences can include, negative publicity, actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claims for damages.
5.6	Seek guidance from your manager first before posting information if you have doubts about its confidentiality or appropriateness. Be aware that content on social media websites may be subject to Freedom of Information requests.
5.7	Handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the council's data protection policies and Information Commissioner's guidance on Data Protection. Never give out personal details such as home address and telephone numbers.

| 5.8 | Respect copyright. Re-tweeting or sharing other people's social media content is fine, but do not present someone else's text, images or videos as EBC's.

Placing images or text on the site from a copyrighted source (for example extracts from publications or photos) without permission is likely to breach copyright. Avoid publishing anything you are unsure about. Breach of copyright may result in an award of damages against us. |
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| 5.9 | Keep your tone appropriate, avoiding posts which could be considered discriminatory, bullying or harassment, for example, making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality) disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age. |
| 5.10 | Ensure posts maintain political neutrality and do not indicate individual political opinions. |
| 5.11 | Avoid bringing the council into disrepute, for example, by:
• criticising or arguing with customers, colleagues, partner organisations; or
• Making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups; or
• Posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content. |
| 5.12 | If an untrue statement is published about a person, which is damaging to their reputation, they may take a libel action against us. This will also apply if we allow someone else to publish something libellous on our website if we know about it and do not take prompt action to remove it. |
| 5.13 | Any posted material will be available on the internet indefinitely, and it is virtually impossible to recall or completely delete material once posted. There may be media interest so posting requires care. If you don't know if something you want to publish is appropriate seek the advice of your manager. |
| 5.14 | Be aware of safeguarding issues, as social media sites can be misused. If you have concerns about other site users, you have a responsibility to report these to your manager.

You should plan all your social media activities with safeguarding in mind, promote online safety and make sure that your content is suitable. If inappropriate material is posted to an EBC account by a third party, the account user should remove this as soon as |

	possible and take steps to ensure that the originator of the inappropriate material is not able to post again. A disclaimer and an apology should be posted for any offence the third party material may have caused.
5.15	If an officer receives any threats, abuse or harassment from members of the public through their use of social media then the matter should be handled by prompt and accurate completion of an Incident Report Form within 24 hours of the incident.
6.0	**Social media conduct for employees working with children and vulnerable adults**
6.1	If you are an account holder do not use the account to private message with children or adults who use council services. This includes family members, carers or friends of clients. Requests should be politely declined explaining that it is against council policy, which is designed to protect staff and the public from any misunderstandings.
6.2	From time to time, you may become aware of material or information posted on social media sites or through other communication channels, which causes concern about the safety of vulnerable users. In these circumstances you have a duty to report these concerns and follow the appropriate safeguarding procedures.
7.0	**Images/Photographs**
7.1	Photographs should not be taken on personal equipment. Only photographs taken with and downloaded onto Council equipment may be added to EBC social media sites.
7.2	Images of children, young people and vulnerable adults, who are clearly identifiable, should not be used without written permission of parents or carers and the purpose of the photograph and how it will be used is explained. Photographs should not be uploaded onto any site in a format that can be copied or altered.
7.3	Photographs should be labelled, dated and not identify children unless for a specific event e.g. an award given – and then only displayed with signed authority of a parent or carer.
7.4	Photos/videos of children, young people and vulnerable adults should always respect and reflect the personal dignity of the individual(s) and they should be clothed.

8.0	**Responsibilities**
8.1	The council will: • make social media access available to employees as administrators as appropriate to their work needs; • set clear standards of behaviour expected by employees; • ensure all employees receive the appropriate information/training in relation to social media.
8.2	[Post holder/IT] will manage the allocation of all social media accounts and user names.
8.3	HR will maintain a log of all account holders and users and access details.
8.4	Corporate Development will monitor the use of social media to ensure compliance with council policies and guidelines. However, it is the responsibility of service managers to ensure account holders and approved users are posting responsibly.
8.5	Managers have a duty to ensure that employees comply with this policy and relevant guidance.
8.6	Employees using social media must be aware of and comply with this policy and other related council policies.
8.7	Account holders and approved users must not share account details and passwords.
8.8	Employees using social media on a personal basis must be aware that any online activities or comments made in a public domain must be compatible with their position within the Council. Keep it factual and avoid discussing work, colleagues or clients in a derogatory manner.
9.0	**Guidelines**
9.1	Guidelines for setting up profiles, managing content and general best practice are contained at Appendix 1. Guidelines in the personal use of social media are contained at Appendix 2.
10.0	**Breaches of policy**
10.1	Misuse of social media or breaches of this policy may lead to access being withdrawn and disciplinary action under the council's disciplinary procedure.

10.2	Serious breaches of this policy, for example, social media activity causing serious damage to the council, may constitute gross misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
10.3	Breaches could also lead to fines being issued and possible criminal or civil action being taken against the council or the individual(s) involved.
	Referral to other policies
	Code of Conduct
	IT Acceptable Use Policy
	e-Safety Policy
	Disciplinary Procedure
	Incident Reporting Procedure and Customers of Concern protocol
	Data Protection Policy
	Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy
	Dignity at Work policy
	Equality and Fairness Strategy

APPENDIX 1 - **SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES**

1.0	**Why do we need guidelines for professional use?**
1.1	These guidelines are for those who are using social media in a professional capacity on behalf of the Council. When you use social media professionally you are writing on behalf of the Council. These guidelines are written to assist you and ensure a corporate style across our social media presence.
2.0	**What should you say and how should you say it?**
2.1	Good communication with residents is about being informative – open, honest and two-way. Communicate to increase awareness of matters relevant to the topic that the page/account has been set up for
2.2	• Be polite. • Write as if you were talking to a customer on the phone. Don't be too formal but don't use text-speak. Unlike speaking to a customer on the phone however, use their first name if you know it. • Write from the point of view of the page or stream. Use "We" and "Our" rather than "I" • Keep posts brief
3.0	**When should you say it?**
3.1	Social media sites require moderation. This involves monitoring, managing and responding to any comments published by other users on a particular page or account. This needs to be undertaken on a regular basis and plans will need to be put in place to ensure this is done effectively.
3.2	Nominated managers/users will regularly post content, read all replies, direct messages and comments and ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the appropriate team. It is recommended that users tweet at least [Times] a day and post to a Facebook page at least [regularity].

4.0	**When should you reply?**
4.1	You should reply to comments directed at your stream or on your page as soon as possible.
4.2	If you need to get clarification on something from another team tell the customer. Say something like "We need to ask the Neighbourhood First team about this, we'll get back to you" to let the customer know you've seen their comment or request.
4.3	Ensure you respond appropriately to annoyed or disgruntled customers. How you respond is vital. It is a positive thing that people care enough to enter into a discussion. - Respond as quickly as possible. - Respectfully correct inaccurate information. - Explain how you are going to handle the situation. - Don't ignore it or delete it
5.0	**When should you remove a comment?**
5.1	Remove any comment on a Facebook page you consider breaking the terms of use. This includes comments that break the law like racist abuse or threats but also commercial advertisements or links to sites not connected with the subject matter.
5.2	On a general Facebook page don't remove deliberately inflammatory posts unless you consider any debate which results from their posting as inappropriate.
6.0	**When should you share a comment?**
6.1	If you see content on another page or profile that's relevant to yours, particularly if it's one managed by the Council then re-tweet or share it on your page or profile.
7.0	**Emergency or crisis situations**
7.1	During an emergency or crisis people actively look to social media for information that will help them build situation awareness and make decisions. The usual practice in a crisis or emergency is that all information and update messages will be agreed by a member of the Corporate Management Team before updates are communicated.
8.0	**Role of Cobb PR**
8.1	Cobb PR is the communications agency the Council uses. The agency provides advice and guidance in:

	• Matters where support is required in managing our reputation • Specific strategic communication campaigns The agency will liaise with the Chief Executive when there is a crisis or emergency to ensure consistent messages are communicated.
9.0	**Conclusion**
9.1	Using social media successfully in a professionally capacity is a mixture of good customer service practice and common sense.
9.2	In any correspondence using social media if you are unclear as to how to proceed please contact your manager.
10.0	**Introduction to Facebook and Twitter**
10.1	**Facebook**
	Facebook is a free social networking site that allows people to connect with their selected network of 'friends'. It is one of the most popular social media sites. It provides a platform to communicate and share information, photos, videos and links with other Facebook users.
10.2	Pages can be searched for by anyone, but to access it, you must 'like' the page, request to join or request a friend. You can also be asked to join or be sent a 'friend' request.
10.3	**Status Updates**: Usually a 1-2 sentence update from the owner of the page. Every time there is a status update it appears on the news feed of 'friends' or those who 'like' the page. They can also be 'shared' by readers, liked and commented on. **Wall Posts**: Used to share text on the 'wall' and can be uploaded and accessed by all 'friends' or those who 'like' the page. They can be commented on, 'liked' and 'shared'.
10.4	It is not possible to create a user profile for an organisation, a department or service as this would break Facebook's terms of use.
10.5	Facebook instead offers 'Pages' which can be used to promote an organisation, brand or prominent figure. Pages can be managed by one or more Facebook users.
10.6	Use of Facebook in an emergency or crisis provides swift updates containing information and a link to the main page can update the public in an effective and timely way.

	• Providing a forum for discussion (the group's 'wall') so questions and answers can be quickly updated in order to prevent rumour spreading. • Information can be spread on a large scale and can be shared by 'friends' or 'members' to widen its reach further.
11.0	**Twitter**
11.1	Twitter is a free social networking and micro-blogging site that enables its users to send and read messages known as tweets.
11.2	Twitter lets you write and read messages of up to 140 characters, or the very length of this sentence, including all punctuation and spaces.
11.3	The messages are public and viewable from the author's profile page. Users are able to decide which accounts they follow and receive messages from.
11.4	Use of Twitter in an emergency or crisis provides immediacy, in that it gets information out to the public straight away. • Ability to inform the public and spread understanding. • Wide reach, allowing crisis communication to traders, businesses, media and residents. • Ability to gain feedback and receive direct communication ensures it is a valuable tool to be engaged with during emergencies. • Capacity to conduct rumour management and correction of mis-information. • It is easy to use and therefore allows easy access to all key information, for both responders and the general public.

APPENDIX 2 - GUIDELINES IN PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

1.0	**Guidelines**
1.1	How you behave online can have an impact on you professionally as well as personally. Be mindful that any online activities/comments made in a public domain, must be compatible with your position within the Council, and safeguard yourself in a professional capacity.
1.2	You need to be aware that the information you post on your personal social media profile can make you identifiable to service users, as well as people you know in a private capacity.
1.3	Protect your own privacy. To ensure that your social network account does not compromise your professional position, ensure that your privacy settings are set correctly.
1.4	Anything that is posted outside work using social media, including comments, photos, images and video material does not remain private and so can have an effect on or have work-related implications. Therefore, comments made through social media, which you may intend to be "private" could leave you open to scrutiny from the public and could affect your own professional reputation and that of the council and may be in contravention of the Code of Conduct, the Dignity at Work Policy and/or the Disciplinary Procedure. Once something is online, it can be copied and redistributed making it easy to lose control of. Presume everything you post online will be permanent and can be shared.
1.5	Do not discuss the council, your work, clients, partner organisations or the people you work with on social networks. Even when remarks about colleagues are anonymised, these are likely to be inappropriate and may be deemed as bullying and/or harassment. Discussions on social networks should not be considered private, even in a forum with restricted access (such as on someone's

	Facebook wall). It is not the same as having an offline discussion among friends or a one-to-one email conversation. Social networks are designed to make sharing as easy as possible, so anything you say may be circulated to a wider audience and could be brought to the attention of council colleagues, councillors and customers.
1.6	Give serious consideration about accepting a friend request from a person you believe could be a service user or may conflict with your employment.
1.7	As a general measure to protect your personal safety and identity, you are advised not to accept friend requests from people who are not personally known to you.
1.8	Social media sites are not fully secure even if the privacy setting is 'private'. Any content posted could be shared by a 'friend' and may be seen by people other than the intended audience. If the information and/or images shared are considered offensive, it could result in a complaint about you to the Council as your employer.
1.9	When setting up your profile online consider whether it is appropriate for you to include a photograph, or provide occupation, employer or work location details.
1.10	You can take action if you find yourself the target of complaints or abuse on social networking sites. Most sites will include mechanisms to report abusive activity and provide support for users who are subject to abuse by others.
1.11	If you find inappropriate references and/or images of you posted by a 'friend' online you should contact them and the site to have the material removed.