

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

(COMMUNITY POLICY)

1. Scope

The Social Media Policy (this 'Policy') outlines how all Livingstone Shire Council's social media channels are to be managed and administered by employees (as defined under the *Local Government Act 2009*), Councillors and contractors, to ensure positive promotion and effective communication of Council news, events and any relevant information to the public through social media. It applies to all social media platforms.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Provide a consistent streamlined approach to managing Council's social media platforms;
- Provide effective communication of relevant Council news, events and affairs through Council's social media channels in a timely, efficient and non-political manner;
- Ensure appropriate authorisation of Council messages and accuracy of information provided; and
- Ensure responses to relevant issues that are raised through Council's social media channels are addressed in a consistent and timely manner and referred to the correct department.

This Policy is not to limit free speech; however it should be recognised that personal use of social media may directly or indirectly cause damage to Council when the use can be identified as originating from a Council employee.

3. References (legislation/related documents)

Legislative reference

Anti-Discrimination Act 1991
Defamation Act 2005
Information Privacy Act 2009
Integrity Act 2009
Local Government Act 2009
Local Government Regulation 2012
Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010
Right to Information Act 2009

Related documents

Advertising, Promotions and Publications Policy
Caretaker Policy
Code of Conduct (Employees)
Councillor Acceptable Requests Guidelines Policy
Councillor Code of Conduct
Discipline Procedure

4. Definitions

To assist in interpretation, the following definitions shall apply:

Chief Executive Officer	A person who holds an appointment under section 194 of the <i>Local Government Act 2009</i> . This includes a person acting in this position.
Channels	The use of online tools for communication, promotion and conversation ie blogs, Twitter, social networks, YouTube etc.
Council	Livingstone Shire Council.
Employee	Local government employee: a) The Chief Executive Officer; or b) A person holding an appointment under section 196 of the <i>Local Government Act 2009</i> .

5. Policy Statement

Social media should be used where the purposes of Council or the benefit to the community is advanced. It should not be used to promote the particular achievements or plans of particular Councillors or groups of Councillors. There may be exceptions to this rule under the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer.

5.1 Acceptable uses of Council's Social Media Channels

Social media may be used, in an appropriate manner, in the following circumstances:

- To advise the public of a new or continuing service or facility provided by Council;
- To advise the public about changes to an existing service or facility provided by Council;
- To increase the use of a service or facility provided by Council free of charge that has community benefit (such as a library);
- To change the behaviour of residents in the Shire for the benefit of all or some of the community or to achieve the objectives of Council;
- To advise the public of the time, place and content of scheduled meetings of Council;
- To advise the public of decisions made by Council at its meetings;
- To request comment on proposed policies or activities of Council;
- To advertise matters required by legislation to be advertised; and
- To promote external services, events and meetings of which Council is a sponsor/ founder/ partner as per Council's Social Media Terms and Conditions.

5.2 Obligations when using Social Media

When using social media, the following obligations apply:

- Only disclose publicly available information. No comment will be made on social media sites regarding confidential, private or legal matters;

- Only use corporate imagery such as logos and official Council photographs with the permission of the Chief Executive Officer (or nominee);
- Ensure that no copyrighted or trademarked material is published without permission;
- Ensure that information posted online is not illegal, libellous, discriminatory, defamatory, abusive, or obscene;
- Ensure that information posted online does not infringe the mandatory Councillor Acceptable Requests Guidelines Policy, mandatory Code of Conduct (Employees) or any other Council code or policy; and
- Not release CCTV footage on Council's social media without the permission of the Chief Executive Officer.

5.3 Authorities and Responsibilities

Council's Communications and Engagement Team is authorised to administer all of Council's social media accounts to ensure adherence to the Social Media Policy for appropriate use, message and consistency in branding.

Community Partnerships is authorised to administer the Livingstone Youth Facebook page while Livingstone Libraries employees are authorised to administer the Library Instagram account. Any new accounts are to be authorised by the Communications and Engagement Team.

Content relating to Council that is posted on the internet by elected members, employees, residents and other community members or organisations will be monitored by the Communications and Engagement Team, and where necessary, content will be addressed in an appropriate manner.

Comments from social media users will be monitored and moderated where possible. Approved employee members will moderate content and respond to relevant posts as quickly as possible during business hours (8.30am – 5pm AEST) excluding public holidays and the Christmas closure period as per Council's Social Media Terms and Conditions. However, the page will be monitored continuously as required in the event of a natural disaster.

Employees must not make adverse comments about the Council or its programs, services, projects, elected members, employees, volunteers, community members or decisions as per Council's Code of Conduct. Elected members and employees should not participate in Council's public consultation process using Council's social media channels or in a manner that will bring Council into disrepute.

Personal usage of social media during work hours is not permitted. Employees will only be permitted to access social media during work hours for work purposes with the approval of their Manager. Personal usage of social media is permitted during designated breaks through the use of personal devices.

5.4 Dealing with Complaints and Requests for Service

When using Council social media channels, employees authorised by the Chief Executive Officer (or nominee) will:

- Only post content that is genuinely expected to be relevant and of interest to followers;
- Respond to enquiries within 24 hours (Monday to Friday) where possible;
- Keep messages simple and engage in conversations where appropriate;
- Link to more information on Council's website where possible or approved external websites if required; and
- Provide relevant, accurate, fair and thorough information.

5.5 Recordkeeping

Council must maintain accurate records in accordance with the *Public Records Act 2002* and Council's Records Management Directive.

In using social media, it is possible that public records will be created. Any content relating to service delivery, public consultation, requests for information, complaints or threats, or any other information relating to business actions and decisions, must be retained and managed in accordance with the Records Management Directive.

The Communications and Engagement team will monitor Council's approved social media platforms/accounts to ensure public records, including those created or received by councillors, are captured, through screenshots or other means, and saved to Council's approved recordkeeping system.

5.6 Breaches

Breaches of this Policy will be dealt with in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct and Discipline Procedure. Any allegations against the Mayor, Councillors or the Chief Executive Officer will be referred to the appropriate authority.

6. Changes to this Policy

This Policy is to remain in force until any of the following occur:

1. The related information is amended/replaced; or
2. Other circumstances as determined from time to time by the Council.

Notwithstanding the above, this Policy is to be reviewed at intervals of no more than two years.

7. Repeals/Amendments

This Policy repeals the Livingstone Shire Council Policy titled 'Social Media Policy (v1.1)'.

Version	Date	Action
1	13/09/2016	Adopted
1.1	23/10/2018	Administrative Amendments – reflect organisational restructure
2.0	15/10/2024	Amended Policy Adopted - related documents and Definitions updated; section 5.5 Recordkeeping added

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