

<b>POLICY:</b>	<b>SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY</b>
<b>Policy number:</b>	SM / 23 / v.4
<b>Available to:</b>	All Staff, Councillors & Public via website.
<b>Supersedes Version:</b>	Social media policy adopted 19 <sup>th</sup> March 2018 V.1 Social Media Policy Adopted 11 <sup>th</sup> December 2023 V.2
<b>Approved by:</b>	Full Council
<b>Approval date:</b>	20/04/2026
<b>Review due:</b>	04/2029

## 1. Description

Social media refers to online platforms and applications that enable users to create, share, and exchange information, ideas, and content within digital communities and networks.

## 2. Purpose of this policy

Social media provides valuable opportunities for Ludlow Town Council to communicate with residents, promote services, and support two-way engagement. However, its use must be responsible, professional, and aligned with the Council's legal duties, values, and reputation

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- social media use does not expose the Council to legal, governance, or reputational risks.
- employees use social media responsibly and in line with Council policies.
- the public can clearly distinguish official Council information from personal views.
- that the reputation of the Council, Councillors, staff, partner organisations, and government agencies is not adversely affected.
- that our users can clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the Council.
- all social media activity supports the Communications Policy, Press Protocol, and Code of Conduct

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all employees using social media in a personal capacity

- authorised officers using social media on behalf of the Council
- councillors, who's guidance and best practice can be found on the Local Government Association site [here](#) along with the [councillor code of conduct](#).

It covers all social media platforms (but is not limited to), including Facebook, X/Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and online community forums.

#### **4. Procedure**

The Communications Policy states that all social media use relating to Council business must be accurate, respectful, and must not disclose confidential information. This Social Media Policy provides the detailed procedures that support those requirements.

***To reflect the Communications Policy, this following section is divided into personal and business use.***

##### **4.1 Personal Use of Social Media by Employees**

Employees may use social media in their personal lives but must be aware that their online activity can impact the Council's reputation, particularly if their role or employer is identifiable.

Employees must:

- not engage in online activity that could bring the Council, its employees, or councillors into disrepute
- not post images of themselves or others at work, in uniform, or on Council premises
- avoid commenting on political matters or public policy in ways that could compromise their role
- be especially cautious during pre-election periods
- not criticise the Council, colleagues, councillors, or partner organisations
- not disclose confidential information or use information gained through their employment
- not use Council branding, photographs, or graphics on personal accounts
- maintain professional standards when contacting councillors via social media
- not make defamatory, discriminatory, bullying, or harassing comments
- not accept friend requests or connections that could compromise impartiality

Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Employees must also comply with the Communications Policy requirement that confidential or sensitive information must not be shared without authorisation.

##### **4.2 Business Use of Social Media by Authorised Officers**

The Communications Policy states that all official Council communications must be approved by the Town Clerk or designated officers. This applies fully to social media.

#### **4.2.1 Authorisation and Management**

- The Town Clerk manages the Council's official social media presence.
- No employee may create or operate Council social media accounts without explicit authorisation.
- Authorised officers must follow the Communications Policy, Press Protocol, and this Social Media Policy.

#### **4.2.2 Standards for Official Posts**

When posting on behalf of the Council, authorised officers must:

- act professionally and represent the Council appropriately
- ensure all posts are factual, accurate, and aligned with Council policy
- avoid arguments, criticism, or inflammatory exchanges
- not disclose confidential information or internal discussions
- not breach copyright or use third-party content without permission
- avoid discriminatory, offensive, or inappropriate content
- not use Council social media for political purposes or to promote councillors' accounts during pre-election periods.
- follow heightened restrictions during pre-election periods
- protect their own safety and avoid sharing personal information

These requirements reflect the Communications Policy, which states that officers must ensure posts are "accurate, respectful, and do not disclose confidential information."

#### **4.2.3 Reputational and Safety Considerations**

- Misuse of Council social media may result in disciplinary action.
- Any threats, abuse, or harassment received through Council social media must be reported immediately to a line manager or the Town Clerk.
- Authorised officers must undertake training in responsible social media use.

### **5. Legal**

An employer may be liable for discriminatory acts carried out by their employees. This principle is set out in the Equality Act 2010 which provides that: 'an act carried out by a person "in the course of their employment" is treated as also having been done by their employer'.

Employees can also put themselves at risk if they misuse social media, either during the employment of the Council or whilst using social media in a personal capacity. The individual(s) concerned could be liable to disciplinary action, including dismissal.

The following risks have been identified with the use of social media. This is not an exhaustive list and is, therefore, for guidance only:

- Civil or criminal action relating to breaches of legislation or copyright.
- Breach of safeguarding through the use of images or personal details leading to the exploitation of vulnerable individuals.
- Virus or other malware (malicious software) infection.
- Criminals hijacking valid user accounts by trying common passwords to gain access.
- Social engineering attacks (also known as 'phishing').
- Damage to user's career and to the reputation of the Council by posting unguarded or inappropriate comments.
- Disclosure of confidential information.
- Bullying or harassment.

In light of these risks, the use of social media is regulated to ensure that such use does not damage the Council, its employees, Councillors, partners and the people it serves. As such, this policy aims to ensure that:

- a consistent and corporate approach is adopted and maintained in the use of social media;
- Council information remains secure and is not compromised through the use of social media;
- users operate within existing policies, guidelines and relevant legislation;
- the Council's reputation is not damaged or affected adversely.

## 6. Other relevant policies

Communications Policy
Communications Protocol
Press Protocol
Social Media Terms of Use.
The Employee Handbook.
Internet and E-mail policy.
GDPR Policy.