

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	5 January 2022
Subject:	Social Media Policy – Review
Report of:	Head of Corporate Services
Corporate Lead:	Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Leader of the Council
Number of Appendices:	Two

Executive Summary:

Communications has a vital role to play in supporting Tewkesbury Borough Council to deliver its vision and promises to local people. Social media provides a modern and targeted form of communication and is commonly used in addition to more established forms of communication.

A review of our social media and policy guidelines has been carried out to ensure it remains in line with legal requirements and reflects best practice. Importantly, our social media policy and guidelines has been developed to help support our drive for accessible and customer-focused services, while protecting the council's reputation and ensuring the effective and safe use of social media.

The policy and guidelines was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 November, where the Committee recommended approval to Executive Committee.

Recommendation:

To APPROVE the updated social media policy and guidelines.

Reasons for Recommendation:

Given the profile of our social media channels, a regular review of our policy and approach to social media is important.

Resource Implications:

None, other than officer time to monitor social media channels.

Legal Implications:

Use of social media sites, and the creation of new Council profiles, does give rise to additional legal risks for the Council in terms of data protection and copyright legislation as well as the law relating to defamation and confidentiality. The proposed policy does, however, include adequate safeguards to meet these risks, in particular, the approval of a business case by the corporate management team, designation of a single named responsible officer and maintenance of a corporate record of approvals by the Communications Officer.

Risk Management Implications:

The policy and guidelines reduce the reputational, legal and financial risks that would occur if social media was introduced on an ad hoc basis without fully considering implications or monitoring the effectiveness and impact of such schemes post-implementation.

Performance Management Follow-up:

The effectiveness of an approved use of social media will be regularly monitored to ensure it achieves the stated outcomes.

Environmental Implications:

None directly arising from this report.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Our previous social media policy and guidelines was created in 2015 and detailed a robust approach – for both officers and members - to managing social media accounts.

1.2 The social media landscape is constantly evolving, with new platforms being introduced and existing channels adapting their functionality to current trends, so a regular review of the policy is necessary to ensure our use of social media to engage with stakeholders is appropriately delivered.

1.3 The Corporate Services Manager presented an updated social media policy and guidelines to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November, and following a discussion around the different types of social media accounts the Council runs, the Committee recommended approval to Executive Committee.

2.0 WHY DO WE NEED A SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY?

2.1 Our social media policy (Appendix 1) helps to ensure an appropriate and effective use of social media platforms, and that a standardised approach to our online communication is adopted. It acts as a point of reference for officers, temporary contractors, volunteers, agency staff and members who post on Council-run social media channels, and acts as a useful guide for those who have recently joined the Council.

2.2 Our policy also ensures that social media usage is aligned to the corporate Communications Strategy - that all Council-run social media channels remain professional and adhere to our brand guidelines, and that all communications through social media meet legal requirements.

3.0 OUR APPROACH TO SOCIAL MEDIA

3.1 We manage social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube. These platforms provide a quick, accessible and free way to engage with our communities. They allow us to demonstrate that we are an open and transparent organisation, and to operate as a trusted source of information among a sea of fake news. We can also use social media platforms to correct and limit the damage from misinformation being spread online.

3.2 Social media also allows us to communicate with – and respond to – members of our community on an immediate basis. Since messages can be communicated incredibly quickly, residents can be kept informed up-to-the-minute and benefit from more accurate information in a manner not possible before the advent of social media.

4.0 MAIN CHANGES TO THE POLICY

4.1 It is important we carry out a regular review of our social media approach to ensure we are meeting legal requirements and reflect best practice. Our policy was previously reviewed in 2015, and it was found to be relevant and up-to-date, with the following main amends:

- The inclusion of Instagram as a social media channel used by the Communications team.
- The recommendation that Members help to promote the Council’s messages to their social media followers by sharing content from our corporate accounts on their own pages.
- An explanation of why the Council does not currently interact on Facebook noticeboards.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 23 November 2021.

6.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

6.1 Council Plan (2020-24).
Communications Strategy.

7.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

7.1 Duty to involve.

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

8.1 Managed within current resources and budget.

9.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

9.1 None.

10.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

10.1 The policy helps to improve access to information and improves the involvement of some hard to reach groups.

11.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

11.1 None.

Background Papers: None.

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Appendices:

- 1 – Social media policy and guidelines.
- 2 – Councillors’ guidance to social media.