

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this Social Media Policy is to set out guidelines for those who work for, or are associated in any way with Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC) and includes council members. This policy sets out a fair, transparent and practical measure that will contribute to the protection of the council and employees' credibility and reputation.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This procedure applies to all employees, council members, agency workers and those undertaking duties for or on behalf of HBBC. Suppliers and service providers will be made aware of their duties and responsibilities during the procurement process.

3. Principles

- 3.1 This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including; Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, all other social networking sites, and all other Internet postings, including blogs.
- 3.2 It applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes, whether or not during office hours or otherwise. This policy applies regardless of whether or not the social media is accessed using IT facilities and equipment provided by HBBC or equipment belonging to you or a third party such as a library or internet café or the use of a smart phone, tablets, net-book laptop or any other device that can be used to access the internet.

4. Policy

- 4.1 Employees may be required to remove immediately any Internet postings and social media communications which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action, including dismissal.
- 4.2 Employees are reminded of their contractual duty and must not post or communicate disparaging or defamatory statements using social media or otherwise about:

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council

Our employees

Our councillors

Our clients, customers or tenants

Our suppliers their agents or contractors

Or make statements that could be construed as being damaging or detrimental to the reputation of HBBC.

- 4.3 There are specific policies for addressing individual's concerns that relate to Whistle Blowing, Grievances and or Bullying and Harassment allegations. Social Media must never be used in place of the formal policies which do offer individuals elements of legal protection.
- 4.4 Employees are personally responsible for what they communicate via social media. Employees must be aware that anything they publish might be read or accessed by an audience wider than intended. Employees should ensure that any social media posting is communicated on their own behalf and does not appear to be linked with Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council in any way.
- 4.5 Employees must not post comments about sensitive or confidential business related topics.
- 4.6 Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action being taken against you, including dismissal. Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours, and regardless of whether Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council equipment was used for the purpose of committing the breach. If an employee is suspected of committing a breach of this policy they will be required to co-operate with the investigation, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details. If you become aware of a breach of this policy you must notify your manager or HR immediately.
- 4.7 It is the responsibility of all employees to read and understand the guidelines provided with this policy.

Social Media Guidelines (to be distributed to staff)

Introduction

Code of Conduct and Acceptable Usage Policy for Email, the Internet and Corporate Network Access provides the foundation for the following Social Media Guidelines for employees of Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council.

As outlined in the Officers' Code of Conduct, as a responsible employer, the council fully respects that, in general, what staff do on their own time is their affair. However, activities in or outside of work that affect job performance, the performance of others or the council's reputation are a proper focus for council policy.

That's why the same principles and guidelines that apply to HBBC employees activities in general, as found in the Officers' Code of Conduct, apply to employees' activities online. As such, a serious breach of these guidelines will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

Definition of social media

For the purposes of these guidelines, social media is held to include:

- logs (e.g. Wordpress, Tumblr, Blogger)
- Micro-blogging (e.g. Twitter)
- Forums
- Networks (e.g. Facebook, Ning, LinkedIn)

- File-sharing sites (e.g. YouTube, Flickr)

New social media tools are being created all the time, so this list is not exhaustive.

The council's social media accounts on twitter and Facebook are accessible only to the Communications Team and social media trained web editors.

Many other employees may have their own personal social media accounts or may maintain a personal blog outside of work. These guidelines aim to provide helpful, practical advice to protect both the employer and the employee using social media sites – whether that is inside or outside of work.

Social Media Guidelines

1. All Council employees are bound by the Officers' Code of Conduct and Acceptable Usage Policy for Email, the Internet and Corporate Network Access.
2. The principles covering the use of social media by council employees in a personal capacity are the same as those that apply for any other media. Social media is a public forum and the same considerations apply as would, say, to speaking in public or writing something for publication either officially or outside of work.
3. Every employee is considered to be personally responsible for the content they publish on-line. This may mean that information published online will remain public for a long time and may still be seen after it has been deleted. In social media the boundaries between professional and personal can sometimes become more blurred – so it's important to be particularly careful. If you're about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, and it is related to the council, feel free to discuss it with your manager or the communications team first. Ultimately, however, you have sole responsibility for what you post or publish in any form of online social media.
4. Council employees receive a great deal of information relating to the council's business, as well as confidential information about customers, businesses, councillors and other employees. Much of this information needs to be treated as confidential and should not be disclosed either inside or outside work, even to family and friends without authority. In the same way, such information should not be disclosed on social media, even to colleagues as this can be viewed publicly by others. Similarly you

should not publish anything that might allow inferences to be drawn which could embarrass or damage a customer, councillor or another employee.

5. Be aware of your association with HBBC in online social networks. If you identify yourself as a HBBC employee or if you can be identified as an HBBC employee by your association with work colleagues on social media sites, you should ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to colleagues and customers:
 - a. Don't use racist, sexist or other bigoted language, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in your workplace.
 - b. show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory—such as politics - which might be seen to compromise your impartial service to the council.
 - c. Don't use online social media to air your differences in an inappropriate manner.
 - d. Take care about commenting on council policies or practices and avoid commenting altogether on controversial issues.
 - e. do not deny or affirm work-related rumours (or suggest the same in subtle ways) or speculate about them in any way.
6. If you do choose to publish appropriate content online relating to the council or council matters in your personal capacity you must make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the council. You should use a disclaimer such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent the opinions of Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council". It remains the case that some topics relating to the council are confidential and should never be discussed, even if you're expressing your own opinion and using a disclaimer.
7. When you see misrepresentations made about the council by the media or others, you may choose to add comments on the original discussion to point that out. Always do so with respect, stick to the facts and identify your affiliation to the council. You must make sure that what you say is factual and that it does not disparage others. This does not mean that you have to put up with rude or offensive remarks being made to you, but if you choose to reply, you should do so in the same professional way as

you would if those remarks were being made to your face or over the phone.

8. If you hear something on social media that you need to feed back to colleagues then please pass that information on to the relevant person. For instance, if you come across people complaining that the website isn't working, please pass that information on to the Communications Team to rectify.
9. Don't use the HBBC logo unless approved to do so.
10. It is important that you are aware that posting any content that is considered inappropriate may result in disciplinary action.