



Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Ethical Governance & Personnel Committee 10 October 2023

Social Media Policy and Guidelines

Report of Director Corporate Services.

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report contains the updated social media guidance and best practices for employees and councillors.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Agree and note the updated social media policy and guidelines for employees and elected members.

3. Background to the report

- 3.1 The council's first social media policy and guidelines document was approved by the council's Ethical Governance and Personnel Committee in August 2013. Since then, the media landscape has changed radically, with the council relying on social media more than ever to communicate with residents. At the same time, the function of social media platforms and the widespread use of smartphones has opened up social media to a wider audience, making it possible for anyone to record and share images with a worldwide audience direct from their mobile phone.
- 3.2 The new updated policy provides guidance for those who work for or who are associated in any way with Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC) on how to responsibly use social media at work and in their personal lives. It also includes some guidance and best practice advice for councillors. It supports the council's own social media account editors and service managers in dealing with any issues that arise and supports the council's HR and ICT procedures to manage inappropriate content.

3.3 The council's multi-disciplinary group of social media editors and the web editor have contributed to this policy and endorse it.

3.4 The main updates made to the 2013 policy are:

- Widened the policy to include social media platforms that have grown in popularity since 2013 – notably TikTok, Instagram and Nextdoor. The council does not currently have a TikTok account but it is included in the policy due to its popularity.
- Set out the GDPR compliant process required for gaining consent before publishing photos and videos of people on social media.
- Added a new section setting out the law as it applies to social media. This includes general legal issues that all social media users should be aware of including the laws of libel, copyright, data protection and for the safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
- A reminder for all employees in politically restricted posts to remain politically neutral when posting, sharing or reacting to social media posts, even in a private capacity. Additionally, a new section sets out the stricter rules that apply to all employees during the pre-election period.
- Clarifying the formal permissions process that must be undertaken by any team wishing to set up a new HBBC social media account.
- Ensuring any images recorded by employees while at work have all the appropriate permissions in place and do not show conduct that could bring the council into disrepute or breach confidentiality, particularly if those images are to be shared on social media. The policy reminds all employees that breaches of the policy can result in disciplinary action.
- Included new separate guidance for elected members.

3.5 The Communications Team will work with service managers to make sure the policy and guidance is cascaded throughout the organisation so that all employees understand and respect the policy.

3.6 Unison has undertaken staff consultation on this policy its recommendations have been noted and/or adopted.

4. Exemptions in accordance with the Access to Information procedure rules

4.1 open session

5. Financial implications (IB)

5.1 None

6. Legal implications (MR)

6.1 Set out in the amended guidance.

7. Corporate Plan implications

7.1 Set out in the amended guidance.

8. Consultation

8.1 Unison, council social media account users (cultural services, Atkins Building, town centre, communications) and the Web Officer were consulted on the content of this policy.

9. Risk implications

9.1 It is the council's policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.

9.2 It is not possible to eliminate or manage all risks all of the time and risks will remain which have not been identified. However, it is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that the significant risks associated with this decision / project have been identified, assessed and that controls are in place to manage them effectively.

9.3 The following significant risks associated with this report / decisions were identified from this assessment:

Management of significant (Net Red) risks

Risk description	Mitigating actions	Owner
S.04 Damage to reputation/adverse publicity	This policy supports the code of conduct for officers and councillors and the ICT acceptable use policy.	Bill Cullen

10. Knowing your community – equality and rural implications

10.1 Set out in the revised guidance.

11. Climate implications

11.1 set out in the revised guidance

12. Corporate implications

12.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

- Community safety implications
- Environmental implications
- ICT implications
- Asset management implications
- Procurement implications
- Human resources implications

- Planning implications
 - Data protection implications
 - Voluntary sector
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Background papers: Social Media Policy and Guidelines

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