



## EMERSONS GREEN

TOWN COUNCIL

### **Social Media Policy**

Emersons Green Town Council recognises the benefits and opportunities that the internet and multi media provide to access and share information using a wide range of on line facilities. There are however some considerations and standards to apply when using the Internet and this policy establishes the councils position regarding the use of the internet, mobile web browsing and specifically social media websites.

The council's Code of Conduct provides the basis for this policy and associated guidance. The phenomenon of social media, mobile web browsing and its impact in the workplace is still emerging and the rules are still developing, therefore this policy and the supporting guide will be regularly reviewed by the Town Clerk.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the supporting social media guide.

This policy covers all staff and Councillors, the word “employees” is used throughout and encompasses both staff and Councillors.

#### **Scope**

- 1) This policy covers the use of social media, including social networking websites such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube, content communities and blogs.
- 2) The policy and guidance aim to ensure that the council and its employees are protected when using social media.
- 3) This policy closely relates to other council documents including;
  - Bullying and Harassment policy
  - Code of Conduct
  - Grievance policy
  - Managing Employee Performance policy
- 4) Be aware of The Data Protection Act – for more information please see the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) policy.

#### **Policy**

The important factor is that when using social media at work or in relation to Council matters employees are aware that expected standards of behaviour do not differ from those carried out off line.

Users of social media and other websites must realise that what is published has the potential to be accessed for many years, even after the original content has been removed.

Please be aware that The Computer Misuse Act 1990 introduced 3 criminal offences: unauthorised access; unauthorised access with intent to commit a serious offence; and unauthorised modification of computer material.

Please note this policy must be complied with, if not disciplinary action may be taken which could ultimately result in dismissal.

## **1. Using Social for work purposes**

The following refers to employees accessing social media as part of their role/employment:

- a) Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any other council policies or expected standards of behaviour at work.
- b) The use of social media should not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content and must not interfere with council employee's duties or performance. Employees may be required to remove content which is considered to be in breach of this policy.
- c) Information that will bring the council into disrepute is not to be discussed, referred to or stated on any internet website or any other social media channel.
- d) The Emersons Green Town Council logo must never be used when publishing information on websites unless permission has been given by the Town Clerk or Full Council.
- e) Individuals (including service users, employees and their families must not be named, described nor have their photos published on any website, without their express permission being given in writing.
- f) References must not be provided for employees (current or previous employees) on social networking sites as they may be attributed to the council and create a liability for both the content author and the council.

## **2. Personal Use**

The council respects the right of employees to freedom of expression, private and family life and the intention is not to interfere with this right. However the following must be applied:

- a) Employees must make it clear when publishing content online that they are speaking on their own behalf by writing in the first person and by using a personal email address. Remember that what is published has the potential to be accessed for many years, even after the original content has been removed.
- b) Information or remarks that will bring the council into disrepute are not to be discussed, referred to or stated on any internet website or online tool. However the council recognises that certain comments may amount to a 'protected disclosure' under laws on whistle blowing, which would give protective rights to the employee.
- c) Publishing personal content should not be made using any Emersons Green Town Council email addresses or logos unless on a council authorised site. All information on social media is subject to Freedom of Information requests so be aware of the council's liabilities. If in doubt check with the Town Clerk.

- d) Individuals (including service users, employees or their families) must not be named, described nor have their photos published on any website, without their express permission being given. However this does not apply where colleagues have an association through a social media site in their personal life.

## **Responsibilities**

### **All employees must**

- a) Read and comply with this policy, any service specific rules and other related policies and documents, including the council's code of conduct and ICT Security policy and ICT Privacy policy.
- b) Report any misuse of social media that they are aware of through the appropriate channels e.g. the Town Clerk.
- c) Comply with copyright and data protection legislation.
- d) Ensure that the use of social media at work does not interfere with their duties.
- e) Take personal responsibility for their actions carried out online, and realise the potential effect publishing inappropriate content may have on their employment with Emersons Green Town Council.