

Public Document Pack

MINUTES

STANDARDS

8 DECEMBER 2016

Present:

Members:

Councillors: Taylor (Chair)
Fisher
Tindall
C Wyatt-Lowe

Officers:

Mark Brookes – Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer
John Worts - Information Security Team Leader
Chris Gaunt - Legal Governance Team Leader
Kayley Johnston – Member Support Officer (Minutes)

Also Attendance:

TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL CO-OPTED REPRESENTATIVES:

None present

INDEPENDENT CO-OPTED REPRESENTATIVES

John Ebdon and Brendan Henry

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Rachel Keil (Independent Person)

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

33 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2016 were confirmed by the Members present and were then signed by the Chairman.

34 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies received from Cllr Matthews and Cllr Madden. Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe attended as a substitute.

Cllr Taylor informed the committee that he had given M Brookes a couple of questions from the Chairman of Development Control, and when appropriate for M Brooks to answer them.

M Brookes introduced the report stating that they will be going through the planning code of practice. C Gaunt has helped M Brooks with the process and is happy to take members through it, highlighting the main changes.

M Brookes said that once it had been considered at this committee it will then be taken to the Development Control Committee for comments then onto Council for adoption.

C Wyatt-Lowe asked if she had to declare an interest as she sits on that committee.

Cllr Taylor said this this won't cause any problems, M Brookes agreed.

Cllr Taylor informed the committee that the Chair of Development Control was talking about pre meetings and it being open to all committee members, a legal officer should also be present and the meeting should not discuss details or merits of any cases.

Cllr Taylor asked M Brookes to remind the committee what pre meetings were for.

M Brookes asked if this could be discussed when we reach that point in the document.

Cllr Tindal added to that saying his understanding was that at the development control committee they are there as individuals.

Cllr Taylor agreed.

Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe said it has been raised before that Councillors raise their concern and everyone is invited but they don't show.

Cllr Taylor referred to the constitution which says a pre meeting will take place and there are exceptions to development control. This will be covered in C Gaunt's presentation and will be discussed when we meet the relevant sections.

C Gaunt presented the planning code of practice which was adopted in 2008 and it has been some time since it was last reviewed. Since then, there have been some changes and the new updates have been included.

C Gaunt referred to paragraph 1.4, this section sets out how the planning process interacts with the member's code of conduct, and reminds us of the risks on planning decisions that are made.

C Gaunt then referred to 3.2, pre applications discussing involving members. These aren't what were mentioned a minute ago. This minimised planning risk and improves development delivery.

Cllr Tindall referred to 3.2.5 page 11, does that mean the content or the fact we are attending the briefing from the developers is confidential. Perhaps the information in the meeting is confidential.

C Gaunt replied, that was his understanding.

C Gaunt then referred to 5.4. There was recent members training on freedom of information act and disclosure of items, this is a reminder.

M Brookes said they have had a few examples of members representing their ward but writing into officers in strong terms about schemes and whether they should be approved or not. This is a reminder that information can be disclosed so be wary of the language when one writes in.

Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe said generally in her experience this arises with newer members. Perhaps this should fall part of the new member development scheme to ensure members are aware.

Cllr Taylor will take this on board; they have had a fairly recently presentation on officer, member respect with confidentiality.

M Brookes said this was spoken about at our last meeting when we were looking at the employee member code of conduct. This was emphasised that we need to respect each other, there was some amendments put forward, this will form part of the induction programme.

Cllr Taylor said that from a member training point of view we have to be competence on the constitution, the constitution is now being looked at and it's something M Brookes has embraced to ensure it will be on the iPad in the future.

C Gaunt referred to 5.8 this links to what we were saying earlier about pre meetings. The aim is to make it clear that we don't consider planning application or merits.

Cllr Taylor said that the point raised by the DC Chair says this meeting does not discuss the details or merits of any case, therefore 5.8 may not be relevant. Maybe the Chairman has taken this the wrong way round; this will only be relevant when we need it.

With M Brooke's blessing he will arrange for a reply to go to the Chair explaining why it's there.

Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe stated that she was very positive when she read this as these pre meeting are very useful, what they do is allow the general application and not its merits and it stimulates the thinking.

M Brookes said they are happy with the comments and comfortable with the drafting so they are happy to leave it in and have another discussion at Development Control.

Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe said it reads as if the pre meeting cannot take place unless there is a member from the Legal Team or a Senior Planning Officer present is that correct?

C Gaunt said the way it is drafted at the minutes is that there shouldn't be any meeting that discusses the planning merits, unless its organised by a senior officer.

C Gaunt said this largely enforces what you said was happening anyway, where someone tries to discuss it and is shut down. This formalises that.

Cllr Taylor states that now this is in place the Chair can refer to the Constitution to say it can't be discussed. There is now evidence to say why this is being said.

C Gaunt referred to lobbying, 6.5 this is a large new section. Members are comparing for particular issues, this doesn't stop the issues being persuaded it reinforces the member in question on the decision making.

B Henry referred to 6.5.3, how you define 'excessively'

M Brookes stated that this was a good point, and that there should be an obligation not to lobby fellow Councillors.

Cllr Tindall said this could be, every Councillor is entitled to step down from the committee and join the party who are objecting or favouring and speak in the planning application but take no part. He thinks M Brookes is right and there shouldn't be any lobbying on an individual basis.

M Brookes agreed he would be happy to remove the word excessively.

Cllr Tindall added to that, saying this is why most of us, when we get emails from the Public all we do is reply saying we will take comments into considerations rather than getting into a debate.

C Gaunt referred to 11.2 this helps strengthen it. The wording from this is recently taken from a court appeal. Linked to that is 11.5 members shall be aware that they are likely to justify a decision by giving evidence to planning enquiry appeal in the event of any challenge.

Cllr Wyatt-Lowe made a point on that stating it's very irritating when members sometimes go against an officer's recommendation, then when it comes to an appeal they don't show up at an appeal to follow it up. This then leaves other members who might not have felt so strongly about it. Is there anyway we can build into that, if members are involved in a decision which leads to an appeal that it's mandatory that they have to respond to the inspector or be present.

Cllr Tindall supported that. The Councillor could end up losing the case and this would then incurs costs, hence the reason why you should justify the reason if you go against the officer.

Cllr Fisher said, we should give reasons prior to the vote, and has a feeling we don't, we vote then discuss, and surely we need reasoning before we vote.

Cllr Tindall said that the officers and legal team are always helpful, therefore they are essential.

Cllr Taylor gave a court example, if someone didn't show in court then the opposite wins.

The member who went against the officers/legal advice they should be held accountable. He supports this; the member has a duty to stand by their reasoning if a decision is called in.

Cllr Tindall said that Cllr Taylor's example to a call-in was a separate issue.

M Brookes said if you have called it in it doesn't mean you're going to object. It means you want the wider committee to look at it.

Cllr Tindall asked if we can look at Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe's point and then come back to this separate issue.

Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe said that sometimes we don't agree with residents but you do it because they asked you to, the views that you present, are representative views; as far as she is aware Cllr's don't call things in off their own back.

The other point is that the call-in works very well and asked for this not to be changed.

Cllr Taylor said that we need to be consistent in the clause, when the member is making a decision contra to an officer's suggestion that person should be accountable to wherever the decision goes. Then this person is individually responsible for answering their reasoning to why the decision was made against the professional advice.

Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe agrees but as Cllr Fisher stated we are responsible for what goes on.

Cllr Tindall said that the committee needs to come to a decision. An officer would not take residents views into the committee, a Councillor would. There is a distinction on the pre committee and committee stage. Those that speak against officers should be made to support the Council in the defence of an appeal.

M Brookes totally agrees with this and explain that's the purpose of having 11.5. To make every member aware that they are likely to be called to justify their decision, the only difference is you say it's a must, dates are set and can't be changed, therefore it maybe hard for someone to attend or the Council may want an officer to argue the case instead. It's difficult to say it's a must but it says they are likely to be called.

Cllr C Wyatt-Lowe agreed with M Brookes.

J Ebdon referred to 2.1.3 can he see that "planning" had been inserted as the only change.

C Gaunt agreed that was the only change.

J Ebdon asked for clarity as to why it needs to have "planning" there.

C Gaunt confirmed that it was for absolute clarity we are talking about planning considerations, also how it fits more certainty just in case it gets queried.

Cllr Tindall asked if he was right in thinking that when you use the phrase material planning considerations, those words form a particular function within the planning acts and planning legislation so people involved in that know exactly what those three words mean.

C Gaunt said yes, courts haven't defined exactly what is meant by material planning considerations, there is no list. There are various cases which say this is and no that's not, but there is not definitive list.

J Ebdon referred to the interaction between 6.4.4 and 6.4.6, does this imply any gift or hospitality from a lobbyist has to be reported, but hospitality which is unavoidable is somehow acceptable from someone who isn't a lobbyist. He is confused by the paragraphs.

M Brookes stated that some hospitality is unavoidable; the point is that you declare it after.

J Ebdon asked if the paragraphs could be merged as one.

M Brookes said this can be looked at and amended in the revised code.

Cllr Taylor asked the committee to look at page 23, on the dress code and asked if anyone had anything that they wished to discuss.

M Brookes said since the last meeting where in the code of conduct, staff employee and member relations there was a section on dress code for members and a bit about staff, he mentioned at that meeting officers were working on a staff dress code and now we need to reflect what was said in the previous code.

This staff dress code attached is what officers have decided to adopt and we respect that it's not something that can be changed now. What he wanted to bring to members attention was what we said in the pervious code is consistent with that, and in his report he has proposed a few slight amendments on page 5.

J Ebdon asked what the definition of "smart" was.

M Brookes said that we wouldn't like to re open a debate on this. He will take this back to CMT. The aim was to get rid of jeans.

Cllr Taylor introduced John Worts who gave a run through of the new guidance on social media and the protocols and policies. He explained that it's a balanced use in working and social life.

The Council have to provide proof of compliance to the Cabinet Office that we are meeting the requirements in a range of security controls.

J Worts focus tonight was around the organisational controls (Policies, Procedures and Guidance) to help both staff and members.

He explained the following approaches to help people when posting on social media;

- That the policies we have are there to protect staff and members and the Council has a two page guidance document explaining the key points, “dos and don’ts” for social media.
- The reasons for having a strong security and privacy setting when setting up accounts on social media
- Handling Personal Data under the Data Protection Act.
- When posting think about objectivity in comments, and that private social media accounts may be deemed as the views of your role as a councillor. Protect the reputation of the Council.
- Training courses that are offered.
- Social media policies and procedures for reporting a suspected breach of security or Data Protection Principles.

J Worts was happy to take questions from Members.

M Brookes asked J Worts, if a Councillor has Facebook and criticises the Council, what your advice is.

J Worts said they should contact Communications or John Worts himself if anyone has concerned about this.

Cllr Taylor said we as Councillors have no right of appeal against slander or liable. In February 2017 we have arranged a member development meeting based upon the wise use of social media. If it is used wisely it is a powerful tool. As a moral standard social media should be used wisely, use with caution.

Cllr Taylor thanked J Worts and C Gaunt and requested a copy of the do’s and don’ts To be attached to the minutes.

M Brookes informed the committee that Rachel Keil (Independent Person) was re-appointed at Council, until annual council in April 2019.

He also added, from the minutes at the last meeting you had asked for an update on Berkhamsted Town Councillors if they had adopted their new policies. The clerk had informed him that the standing orders had been adopted the new HR polices have been subject to an internal discussion and are going for adoption at their Full Council meeting later this month.

Action: None

Outcome: Report was noted.

36 TO REPORT ANY STANDARDS COMPLAINTS

None

37 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The committee agreed that the next meeting will take place on 9 March 2017

38 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

None

The Meeting ended at 8.55 pm



Social Media Policy

(Updated May 2016)

Revised policy on the use of social media

Using social media to improve communication with the public to enhance the Council's reputation and improve internal communication.

Contents

1.0 Policy overview

- 1.1 Aims of the policy
- 1.2 Links to the Council's corporate aims
- 1.3 Policy statement

2.0 Using social media at Dacorum Borough Council

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Social media: business use vs personal use
- 2.3 Social media advice for staff in sensitive positions
- 2.4 IT security
- 2.5 Investigatory use
- 2.6 Internal use of social media
- 2.7 Members' use of social media

3.0 Social media management and quality control

- 3.1 Who manages social media?
- 3.2 How do we manage social media?
- 3.3 Where do we post social media messages?
- 3.4 When are service-specific social media pages necessary?

4.0 Links to other corporate strategies and policies

5.0 Breach of policy

6.0 Legal requirements

Appendices

1. Social media strategy (approved by CMT, September 2015)
2. Service-Specific Social Media (This protocol supplements the Policy on Social Media)
3. Practical guidance for social media users
4. Members general guidance for using social media

1.0 Policy overview

The social media policy is managed by the Communications team. The policy has been adopted by Cabinet (2011) and is used and operated by all staff and members. HR issues relating to social media will be dealt with using the Council's existing HR policies relating to conduct and capability.

Page 11

1.1 Aims of the policy:

- To guide and govern the Council's use of social media so that this channel is used effectively to engage with our stakeholders and enhance reputation;
- To make sure the Council's social networks are secure;
- To manage the Council's reputation and minimise risk;
- To provide a consistent and corporate approach to using social media across the Council;
- To make sure individual social media users agree to principles and standards and operate within existing policies, guidelines and relevant legislation.

1.2 Links to Council's corporate aims:

This policy contributes to the following corporate aims:

Council Vision and Priorities:

The Council's profile and reputation are part of "Delivering for Dacorum" (Corporate Plan 2015-2020).

1.3 Policy statement

This policy applies to both official Council business use of social media, and personal out-of-hours use of social media by Council employees if in reference to the Council.

This policy provides a structured approach to the corporate and service-specific use of social media and will ensure that such use is effective, lawful and does not compromise the Council's information or its computer systems/networks.

Officers and Members are encouraged to use social media positively as another channel to engage with residents and other stakeholders.

Users must use social media sensibly and responsibly, in line with corporate policy, without adversely affecting the Council or its business, damaging its reputation and credibility or otherwise violating any of the Council's policies.



2.0

Using social media at Dacorum Borough Council

2.1 Introduction

'Social media' is the term used to describe the websites and applications that let users create and share content or to take part in social networking – communicating with friends, family, customers and colleagues by posting and sharing information, comments, messages, images and video.

The purpose – whether social, business or both – of social networking is to share information, build communities and encourage collaboration over the internet. It encourages dialogue, participation and involvement.

Examples of social networks include Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram.

Dacorum Borough Council currently uses social media to connect with residents, businesses, staff and councillors. Social media is a rapidly evolving channel and we must continue tapping into its potential to benefit from:

- **improved customer experience** due to the speed of the service, better information provision and convenience;
- **better communications** as messages can be shared faster, to both wider and more targeted audiences and engagement and understanding can be improved;
- **back office improvements** from service issues being highlighted earlier, customers providing more feedback on the processes and more meaningful consultation;
- in the longer term (and in partnership with Customer Services), **saving money** through sharing a message with lots of residents at once, reducing the number of contacts and enquiries the council has to deal with; and
- **reduced costs** from channel shift, contact reduction, opportunities for co-production and increased web transactions.

We use social media to:

- create a sense of community, belonging, pride and identification with the area;
- build and protect the Council's reputation;
- create dialogue and two-way conversations with residents;
- enthuse residents about a particular theme or event;
- support communities to help each other;
- involve people in decisions;
- measure social media activity and gauge opinion;
- reach people who do not use traditional communications and engagement channels.

2.2 Social media: business use vs personal use

When using social media for business purposes employees should:

- a) Be aware of and comply with Dacorum Borough Council's Employee Code of Conduct and relevant information security policies and procedures. This includes ensuring that employees' use of social media does not put the Council's information and security systems at risk or damage our reputation.

b) Be aware of and comply with the **Recommended Code of Practice for Local Authority Publicity** (March 2011) which says that: “Local authorities should ensure that publicity relating to policies and proposals from central government is balanced and factually accurate. Such publicity may set out the local authority’s views and reasons for holding those views, but should avoid anything likely to be perceived by readers as constituting a political statement, or being a commentary on contentious areas of public policy.”

The code also specifies the need for care during periods of heightened sensitivity prior to an election (paragraph 33):

Local authorities should pay particular regard to the legislation governing publicity during the period of heightened sensitivity before elections and referendums – see paragraphs 7 to 9 of this code. It may be necessary to suspend the hosting of material produced by third parties, or to close public forums during this period to avoid breaching any legal restrictions.

“Publicity by local authorities should:

- be lawful
- be cost effective
- be objective
- be even-handed

- be appropriate
- have regard to equality and diversity
- be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity.”

The Communications team will advise if comments on social media networks need to be suspended or taken down.

- c) Be aware that they are personally responsible for the content they publish on any form of social media. (It is important to be confident about the nature and accuracy of the information published.)
- d) Seek permission from customers, partners or suppliers before making reference to them in postings (unless reporting something that is already in the public domain). To comply with the Data Protection Act, written consent must be obtained if posting photographs of residents. (The Communications team can supply copies).
- e) Be wary of publically endorsing companies or products in the Council’s name by sharing posts. Do not re-post/re-tweet other agencies’ messages unless there is a clear link to the Council.
- f) Identify themselves as working for the Council, for example Communications Officer or Communications team. Staff must only use council email addresses and not personal ones. It is reasonable to use generic service email addresses, such as communications@dacorum.gov.uk

g) Never give out personal details such as home address and telephone numbers.

h) Be aware of safeguarding issues. Safeguarding is everyone’s business: if a user has any concerns about other site users, they have a responsibility to report these to the safeguarding lead in their directorate. (Contact Human Resources for the contact in your directorate).

i) Not use insulting, offensive or racist language, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace.

Failure to comply with these guidelines could result in disciplinary action.

The Council’s Corporate Information Technology Security Policy allows that social media may be used by employees for non-business use¹. We recognise that social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter are a popular means of communication and that employees regularly subscribe to such media for personal use.

¹ See [Dacorum Borough Council’s Corporate Information Technology Security Policy section 5.1 Internet Usage](#): “Access to the Internet will be permitted to authorised users by their line manager(s) unless otherwise advised. At the discretion of your line manager, and provided it does not interfere with your work or productivity, the Council permits the use of the Internet facilities for non-business research or browsing during lunchtimes or before/after flexi-time/normal working hours.”

However, it is important that employees recognise the boundary between work and home. When choosing contacts or groups on social media sites to ensure that they do not put themselves in a situation in their home life that could compromise their work and impartiality as a council officer. For example, the groups that council staff join on Facebook or who they follow on Twitter or other social networks may be as important as the status updates that they post.

We encourage staff to use LinkedIn as a means of building positive reputation on both sides, but would remind staff not to reveal confidential information about the Council (in the same way as they are prevented contractually from doing so offline).

While the data on LinkedIn belongs to the employee, the Council's interests as the employer are obviously at stake. We advise that a 'good' LinkedIn profile follows common sense guidelines. For example, use a meaningful job title and be specific about what you are responsible for.

If in doubt members of staff should seek advice from the Communications team, their manager or from the Information Security and Standards Officer. In any situation employees should be aware that any disclosure of information obtained through their position at the council may be covered by the Data Protection Act. Any reports of inappropriate activity linking employees to the Council will be investigated.

Posting anything online that brings the Council into disrepute will be considered a disciplinary offence. Derogatory comments about the Council posted online may constitute misconduct or, depending on the circumstances, gross misconduct.

2.3 Social media advice for staff in sensitive positions

Dacorum Borough Council staff who work in sensitive positions should consider whether it is appropriate to post information relating to their job or employer or personal details about themselves when using their own personal Facebook profile.

Likewise, social media users at the Council need to be sensitive about posting items on our pages about named individual employees.

This is not only to protect staff, but also to safeguard the Council's reputation and possibly our partner organisations.

Facebook's search engines may create potential for criminals (in the case of the police) or others to use the internet and social media to identify personal information about officers in order to embarrass, discredit, harass, corrupt or blackmail them or their families. This could apply to some areas of work at the Council, for example enforcement or anti-social behaviour officers.

Staff should check that privacy settings are set so that information is not made available to all public.

We also recommend staff in sensitive positions do not post any of the following information on the internet or social media sites:

- Details of employer
- Details of employment post
- Images in any uniform
- Mobile telephone numbers
- Home address
- Personal email addresses
- Family members' details
- Hobbies or places often visited
- Details of vehicles
- Sensitive personal data
- Images of colleagues without their consent

Facebook updates how its privacy settings work from time to time, so staff need to keep up to date with these. When selecting an audience for posts, this should be set to at most only 'friends' and never 'public'. Remember that when posting on another person's timeline, they control what audience can view the post. Additionally, anyone who gets tagged in a post may see it, along with their friends.

2.4 IT security

Please refer to the Corporate Information Technology Security Policy.

Staff should not download or install any software related to or hosted on social media sites onto Council equipment.

It is also forbidden to store Dacorum Borough Council data on unmanaged (non-DBC) devices such as smartphones and tablets. There needs to be a clear distinction between work and home devices, the data contained on them and their associated uses.

This means that apps to manage systems like Hammer or CCHQ must only be operated from Council-owned phones. If these are then lost or stolen, they can be remotely wiped of all data.

2.5 Investigatory use

It is recognised that social media can be used for investigatory purposes, such as identifying fraud or illegal events. Employees who use social media for this purpose must comply with relevant guidance and legislation.

2.6 Internal use of social media

Dacorum Borough Council uses the intranet as a closed social network for employees and members, as one of our methods of internal communication.

Examples of what people can do on the intranet include:

1. Post a message: A question, an update on a current project, an interesting article that others will benefit from.
2. Read what colleagues post: Get a pulse of what's happening in the organisation.
3. Like something: Let colleagues know they agree or acknowledge receipt of the message.
4. Reply to messages: Take a step beyond a 'like' and share thoughts on a colleague's post. Individual thoughts become conversations, connect individuals and content and answer questions. It's a good way of crowd sourcing ideas.
5. View profiles: Get to know coworkers by viewing their profiles. If everyone fills out a profile, it helps people connect.

2.7 Members' use of social media

Members are encouraged to use social media to communicate with the public. Social media can enhance the relationship between the public and their elected members, giving people a way to express their concerns directly to their elected representatives.

Members must ensure that their use of social media does not breach the Code of Conduct set out in the Council Constitution. Members should be aware that their personal use of social media reflects on the Council as a whole, and act accordingly. They should also be aware that social networks are public, and views expressed on platforms such as Facebook or Twitter may be picked up by the media. Social media postings should therefore be considered as public statements.

Members must also be careful not to communicate information that is not in the public domain.

3.0 Social media management and quality control

3.1 Who manages social media?

Dacorum Borough Council's use of social media is managed by the Communications team in line with the overall communications strategy, alongside other media channels.

Services wanting to develop their use of social media should contact Communications initially to discuss the most appropriate method, either:

- 1) services supply news and information (photos, links, quotes) for communications officers to post on the service's behalf; or
- 2) services nominate a team member(s) to be trained to become a social media user themselves under the management of the Communications team and in line with our Practical guidance for social media users (see Appendix).

Where there is a strong business case for other teams to develop a stand-alone social media presence (rather than going through the main corporate accounts), approval must be sought

from the service Group Manager and the Communications Team Leader. Conditions for setting up a new Dacorum Borough Council social media account are set out in section 3.3 where do we post?

3.2 How do we manage social media?

The Council uses the system CrowdControlHQ to manage all our social media accounts. CCHQ is a web-based risk management platform that enables us to efficiently control access to our social pages, keeping them safe and secure.

Only trained CCHQ users have authority to use or access the Council's social media channels and act as spokesperson².

Only members of the Communications team may access the Council's social media accounts directly. Direct access passwords to all social media accounts will be held by Communications.

If there is a specific function that CCHQ does not cover (such as editing page information or setting up a new page) the Communications team is responsible for this.

New Facebook pages need to be set up from the Council's business account which is linked to the email address communications@dacorum.gov.uk (and not linked to personal profiles).

¹ This does not apply to Members, who can choose to comment and act as spokesperson on behalf of the Council using their own social media profile. Members should make their position clear to members of the public.

Communications will make sure that all Council social media sites are easily identifiable as originating from the Council and correctly apply the Council's branding and identity guidelines as appropriate.

Among others, CCHQ has the following advantages:

1) Protection and control:

CCHQ allows the Council to protect our social media activity, provide an audit trail, mitigate risk and make sure we comply with security standards.

- Password protection: Sharing passwords across teams, departments or with partners can lead to a number of potential problems, including rogue posting or even loss of control over social media accounts. CCHQ provides permission-based logins which eliminate the need to share passwords.

CCHQ does not store social network passwords but uses the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) standard for authenticating requests between different websites and domains, without having to store end-user passwords.

- Tiered access levels: CCHQ also provides a tiered access, so means that different access/authority levels can be assigned, requiring new users to have posts approved first, while allowing the Communications team to have full access and provide back-up across all accounts
- Audit trail: CCHQ provides a full audit trail. The author of every post can be tracked and any activity is logged as it occurs. This means that people are far less likely to take risks with our social media accounts.
- Abuse-free pages: The 24/7 moderation feature means that posts containing words and phrases we do not want to appear on our Facebook pages will be automatically deleted or moderators alerted.
- Crisis management tools: Using CCHQ we can:
 - Immediately restrict unauthorised access to all social media accounts
 - Monitor what people are saying
 - Engage with residents by posting a unified message to multiple accounts if required
 - Remove abusive posts automatically
 - Suspend individual access of chosen accounts during a crisis

2) Collaboration and engagement

CCHQ engagement features allow users to view and respond to all social media activity in one place and monitor pages anytime of the day or night.

- Dashboard: CCHQ combines multiple accounts in a single dashboard, letting multiple users manage multiple accounts from a single platform.
- Collaborate: It allows colleagues in different locations or departments to work together, ensuring consistency and providing a full audit trail.
- Schedule posts: Users can save time and schedule posts or tweets to be sent at a specific time and date. This makes sure that there is always activity on Council pages, even when users are not around, as well as to programme a campaign in advance.

3) Monitoring and insight

- Usage alerts: These warn system administrators when the activity of any Council social media accounts is too low.

- Buzz monitoring: CCHQ users can discover who is talking about the Council, what they are saying and where they are. As well as initiating conversations through social media, it is important for us to be aware of existing conversations that are going on, and, where appropriate, join in, particularly if doing so may help correct misleading information about the Council and our services.

Note: All staff (whether they are CCHQ users or not) who come across blogs or communities talking about the Council should bring them to attention of the Communications team. Staff should not engage with such groups as a representative of the Council without approval from the Communications team and their manager.

3.3 Where do we post social media messages?

Dacorum Borough Council has developed a well-established presence on social media. To limit the resource needed to monitor and update them and to prevent our social media presence from becoming too fragmented, information and news from across the Council should primarily be channeled through platforms and pages which have already been set up.

Furthermore, wherever possible posts should be concentrated through our main corporate (as opposed to service-specific) pages so that:

- customers understand and recognise which services we provide;
- it is easier to monitor what is being said and so manage the Council's reputation;
- our messages get the widest possible audience and are not diluted.

While some service-specific pages at Dacorum have already been set up, not all have survived. Effective engagement takes time and resources, and a half-hearted attempt could do more damage to a campaign than not having any social media presence at all.

3.4 When are service-specific social media pages necessary?

However, in a few instances there may be reasons for a service to create a service-specific social media page. There are clear ways to determine if this is necessary and how they need to be organised and managed.

The main reasons for creating service-specific pages are:

- if it can be demonstrated that there is capacity within that service to keep the new page alive with regular news and relevant information and respond to customer's queries quickly;
- if there is a substantive business need (such as to address a localised group of users with a specific service interest, such as The Old Town Hall).

Prospective users must undergo CCHQ training and follow user guidance carefully (see Appendix: Practical guidance for social media users).

They also need to appreciate that social media is not a one-way broadcast channel; instead users expect freedom, collaboration and integrity. They want to be able to scrutinise messages, engage in small talk and do things quickly. Failure to understand social media behaviour will result in outcomes such as disengagement, backlash and ridicule.

It is important to remember that our social media communication can form part of a Freedom of Information request or response. Also that newspapers and broadcast media can report on anything they see on our website or through social media.

A service considering establishing a new social media presence needs to ask the following questions:

- Why do you want to use social media and what benefits will you or your customers get?
- Who is your target audience and what is the most appropriate social media channel?
- What information do you have to share?
- Who in your service will manage your social media activity and who will deputise to ensure consistency?
- How will you fit any monitoring and updates into your work schedule?
- How will you get customers to use the channel and build your following?

The Group Manager for the service requesting the social media must sponsor the request which then needs to be submitted to the Communications team for assessment.

4.0

Links to other corporate strategies and policies

This policy links to and should be read in conjunction with the following policies and strategies:

- Employee Code of Conduct
- Conduct Procedure
- Employee Handbook Guidelines
- Corporate Information Technology Security Policy
- Communications Strategy
- Social Media Strategy

5.0

Breach of policy

All internet usage is recorded by the Council's ICT department. Excessive, unauthorised or inappropriate use of social media sites will be recorded and, where necessary, reported to the relevant officer's line manager.

Managers have a duty to ensure that members of staff comply with the social media policy and relevant guidance. Any breaches of this policy by staff should be dealt with in line with council procedures.

Violations of this policy, such as breaching the Data Protection Act, could lead to fines being issued and possible criminal or civil action being taken against the Council or the individual(s) involved.

6.0

Legal requirements

The following legislation has a bearing on, or impinges on the rationale of this policy:

- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Defamation Act 2013
- Recommended Code of Practice for Local Authority Publicity (March 2011)



Members general guidance for using social media

Although the best use of social media is conversational in tone, publishing to the web is still publishing, which means what you've 'said' on the web is written down and permanent.

While there's no additional legal or ethical burden around using social media, the usual legal rules (such as complying with the council's code of conduct) still apply and must be considered when using social media.

The key to whether your online activity is subject to the council's code of conduct is whether you are giving the impression that you are acting as a councillor.

Since the judgment of whether you are perceived to be acting as a councillor will be taken by someone else, it's safest to assume that any online activity can be linked to your official role. This is particularly true if you hold a lead member role and you are commenting on policy or decisions within your portfolio.

If the content of your online activity is objective, balanced, informative and accurate, and you maintain and demonstrate an open mind on any matters on which you may be called upon as a member to make a decision, you substantially reduce the possibility of a successful legal challenge to the content being made.



To make sure you comply with the council's code of conduct and to ensure your use of online media is well received, we suggest the following advice:

DO

- Set appropriate privacy settings for your blog or networking site – especially if you have a private, non-political blog.
- Keep an eye out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on your blog or page and remove them as soon as possible.
- Be aware that the higher your profile as a councillor, the more likely it is you will be seen as acting in your official capacity when you blog or network.
- Be aware that by publishing information that you could not have accessed without your position as a councillor you are likely to be seen as acting in your official capacity.
- Make sure that any comments on policy or decisions within your portfolio reflect your role as lead member.
- Use a disclaimer. Whenever you publish content to any form of digital media, make it clear that what you say they are a representative of your views and opinions and not necessarily the views and opinions of Dacorum Borough Council. However, remember that it is difficult for the audience to separate you from your official role at Dacorum Borough Council, particularly if you are a lead member.
- Treat others with respect – avoid personal attacks or offensive comments.
- Refrain from publishing anything you have received in confidence.
- Ensure you don't bring the council or your councillor role into disrepute.
- Comply with equality laws.

DON'T

- Blog in haste
- Post comments that you would not be prepared to make in writing or in a public meeting. Word spreads faster online than through any other form of communication.
- Publish an untrue statement about a person which is damaging to their reputation as they may take libel action against you.
- Use council facilities for personal or political blogs.
- Publish personal data of individuals unless you have their written permission.

