ARMAGH BANBRIDGE CRAIGAVON DISTRICT COUNCIL	
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AMENDMENT RECORD SHEET

Remove and destroy old pages. Insert new pages as indicated.

Revision Number	Page Number	Date Revised	Description of Revision

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media is the term used for the current range of online tools, websites and interactive media that enable users to interact with each other in various ways, through sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Social media involves building online communities or networks, which encourage participation, dialogue and involvement.

For social media to work effectively it is vital that it is used as part of the overall communications plan; up to date information about the Council, its services and engagement activities must be posted on the corporate website and social media communications should signpost people to appropriate web pages where possible.

We need to set clear guidelines for using social media sites to ensure they are used effectively and that their use does not expose the Council to security risks or reputational damage. Therefore we need a policy on how we will effectively manage all Council social networking sites.

2. AIM/PURPOSE

The aim of this policy is to ensure a consistent approach to all Council social media sites. This policy will clearly set out how Council social media sites should be set up, managed effectively and how any risks or pitfalls should be managed.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees who use Council social media sites for the purposes of promoting council facilities, services and events.

All Council services requesting a social media site will be required to make a comprehensive business case to the Communications Unit by completing the proforma in Appendix 1 of this policy.

The Communications Unit will be responsible for establishing and monitoring Council social media sites.

4. POLICY DETAIL

4.1   SETTING UP SOCIAL MEDIA SITE

The Communications Unit will be responsible for establishing and monitoring social media pages. If an officer feels there is merit in opening/setting up a social media page they will be required to make a business case to the PR/Communications Unit by completing the proforma in Appendix 1.

The proforma must be completed and forwarded to the PR/Communications Unit before any further social media channels can be pursued.

When embarking on social media, department representatives should consider whether they have the resources and the appropriate information to maintain the social channel(s).

Everyone who has been assigned responsibility for monitoring and managing Council social media pages must receive training before commencement of their role. The training will be organised through the PR/Communications Unit.

4.2   MANAGING AND MONITORING

Employees must be aware when commenting on social media they are commenting on behalf of the Council and not as themselves.

It is vital from the outset to establish who is involved with the social media activity and what their responsibilities are. Managing and monitoring social media can be time and resource intensive therefore contingencies should be made for additional resources within the department.

The Officer responsible for managing the page will be the most active on social media. It is the responsibility of this person to create content, monitor comments and engage when necessary and when absent there should be others who have been deputised to manage the social media site.

When a negative comment is posted on social media by a citizen or visitor it is the responsibility of the relevant officer to refer to the Escalation Procedure (see 4.3 of this policy) and identify how the issue should be dealt with. The Communications Unit can provide further advice if necessary.

4.3   ESCALATION PROCEDURE

When using social media as an online tool it is inevitable that you will encounter negative feedback and criticism. However, how you deal with these comments will determine the success of your social media presence.

The Escalation Procedure deals with what needs to be escalated and what doesn't. It is vital to note that in social media it is more beneficial for the brand reputation to respond rather than ignore.

These procedures delegate responsibilities to the various departments involved; therefore it is important that the person responsible for responding to a particular comment is aware of this.

A Facebook 'Like' Page allows you to limit what people post on your profile i.e. whether they can leave a comment. As the very nature of social media is to inspire conversation, it is imperative for fans to have the ability to post comments and opinions on your Page Wall. However these comments may not always be positive.
In some cases the comments can be responded to and in others they must be removed.

The following procedures refer to major incidents, minor incidents, media questioning, customer service issues, as well as the responsibilities and protocols on how they will be handled online.

Major Incident

Definition	A serious event or incident that will have an immediate and negative effect on brand reputation
Examples	Security, data leak, death or serious injury, dog attack
Responsibility	Communications Unit
Procedure	Relevant Officer refers the issue to the Communications Unit who drafts a response and is posted to the page if applicable.
Time Scale	ASAP

Minor Incident

Definition	An occurrence where the brand reputation is at risk but to a lesser degree
Examples	Cancelation of event, reaction to new Council policy or initiative
Responsibility	Relevant Officer
Procedure	Relevant Officer responds to issue with support from Communications Unit

Time Scale	ASAP – as soon as noticed by relevant officer

Media Questioning

Definition	Journalists using social media as a point of contact
Examples	Journalist asks a question, logo or brand usage, comments used as quotes
Responsibility	Relevant Officer
Procedure	Relevant Officer refers Journalist to contact the Communications Unit and provides contact details.
Time Scale	ASAP – as soon as noticed by relevant officer

Customer Service Issues

Definition	Customer relations and experiences with the brand, both positive and negative
Examples	Dissatisfied citizen, complaint about a Council service, dog fouling complaint
Responsibility	Relevant Officer supported by Communications Unit

Procedure	1. Citizen is wrong
	    The response must be verified with relevant parties and then posted. The post should correct the customer in straight tones within the timeframe.
	2. Citizen is correct and department within the social media profile is wrong
	    Apologise within time frame and continue the conversation on a private channel. Inform Public Relations Officer of the comment.
	3. Citizen Rant
	    If no swearing is used then leave the comment. If curse words have been used remove the comment immediately. If further comments are left enquiring about the removal of the post, refer citizen to "House Rules."

Time Scale	ASAP – as soon as noticed by the relevant officer

Citizen Questions

Definition	Queries from customers regarding general running of the department
Examples	Opening times of dog kennel, how to apply for a dog license, report a lost or stolen dog, dog warden contact details
Responsibility	Relevant Officer
Procedure	Relevant Officer answers citizen queries. If it is outside the remit of their department then refer query to the relevant department.
Time Scale	ASAP – as soon as noticed by the relevant officer

4.4   HOUSE RULES

Minor comments and issues, such as the ones outlined below, will be taken care of in the House Rules and the relevant officer has the authority to remove those comments deemed inappropriate by the House Rules.   Each social media site can amend these according to the needs of the service.

Council House Rules for Facebook

The following statement outlines how Council (or insert appropriate FB name) defines unacceptable content on Facebook.

This Page encourages engaging, honest and open conversation with citizens however the Council reserves the right to remove content, which prevents this from happening.

The Council reserves the right to remove comments, without notification, which we deem to be:

- Be civil, tasteful & relevant
- Racist, sexist, homophobic, sexually explicit, abusive or otherwise objectionable
- Disruptive, bully or harass an individual or organisation
- Contains swear words or other offensive language
- Violate the law
- Breaches copyright, defamation and contempt of court (do not post content copied from elsewhere for which you do not have copyright permission)
- Advertise products or service
- Appear to impersonate another person
- Spam or irrelevant
- Describe or encourage activities, which could endanger the safety of others
- Uses an offensive, violent or illegal image as their profile picture.
- Uses an offensive username.

People who continually break these House Rules or encourage others to break these rules will be permanently removed.

By commenting on this page you are indicating that you have read, understand and agree to abide by the House Rules laid out above.

4.5 CRISIS MANAGEMENT

In terms of Crisis Management, the Council needs to be mindful that a public relations issue occurring offline can in some cases play out on social media. If any crisis appears contact the Communications Unit immediately for assistance.

An example of this is Belfast City Council's decision to put down Lennox the dog. Campaigners to save Lennox took to the Council's Facebook Page to plead their case. This resulted in every update made by the Council being taken over by the Lennox story.

Therefore it is recommended that social media is incorporated into the Council's Crisis Management Plan for damage control.

When including social media within the Council's main Crisis Management Plan, bear the following in mind:
- Define the Crisis – who is the person who decides what is and isn't a crisis.
- Chain of Command – this will work in line with the Escalation Procedures set out in this Social Media Policy
- Monitor Comments – if the crisis has broken outside social media, someone should be monitoring the relevant channels and alert a supervisor if the issue is addressed. If the crisis has erupted on social media, someone should be monitoring and reporting on all activity.
- Acknowledge the Issue – make people feel like they are being heard, address the issue and let them know you will have answers.
- Say you're Sorry – if it is appropriate apologise and take responsibility for what has happened.
- Choose the Right Channel – if the story broke on social media then you should respond here first, if it happened elsewhere then this channel should take priority.

5. RELATED POLICIES

This Social Media Usage policy links to the following policies and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Social Media Policy for Employees
- Code of conduct for Local Government Employees
- Internet Policy
- Email Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Communications Strategy
- Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults policy

6. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

The Council will keep a log of all access details and will monitor the use of social media to ensure compliancy with Council policies and guidelines and in support of security and criminal investigations.

7. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis.

8. EQUALITY SCREENING FORM (Appendix 2)

Address equality issues as required.

9. DRAFT EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND OTHER IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Address as appropriate.

REQUEST PROFORMA FOR SETTING UP SOCIAL MEDIA SITE

Name:	**Department:**
Social Channel: e.g. Facebook	**Name of proposed Social Channel:**

Please answer the following questions:	
What aims are you trying to meet with your marketing and communications?	
What marketing channels are you currently using?	
How can social media help you meet these aims better than the channels you are already using?	
What social media channel is your audience currently engaged with?	
What settings will be in place on your page (for example, will people be able to leave comments?)	
Are you able to allocate sufficient time to manage and monitor the proposed social media channels? It is recommended that social media channels are monitored on a daily basis.	
Do you have at least 3 staff members to help manage social media channels? Please specify.	
Do you have contingency plans in place for illness, holidays, resignation etc.?	
Do these staff members understand their role in the process and are they trained to monitor/manage the site?	
Do you have a content plan?	
What content will be published on the site and how often?	
Do you have collateral for the social media channel e.g. logos, imagery etc.?	
Have you read and understood the Council's Social Media Usage Policy and Social Media Policy for Employees?	

Response

Authorised		Unauthorised	
Comments:			

Policy Screening Form

Policy Scoping

Policy Title: Social Media Usage Policy

Brief Description of Policy (please attach copy if available). Please state if it is a new, existing or amended policy.

Social media is the term used for the current range of online tools, websites and interactive media that enable users to interact with each other in various ways, through sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests.   Social media involves building online communities or networks, which encourage participation, dialogue and involvement.

The Council needs to set clear guidelines for using social media sites to ensure they are used effectively and that their use does not expose the Council to security risks or reputational damage.   Therefore the Council needs a policy on how it will effectively manage all Council social networking sites.

Intended aims/outcomes. What is the policy trying to achieve?

The aim of this policy is to ensure a consistent approach to all Council social media sites. This policy will clearly set out how Council social media sites should be set up, managed effectively and how any risks or pitfalls should be managed. The policy specifically outlines the Council House Rules for Facebook and states that the Council reserves the right to remove comments, without notification, which we deem to be:
   • Racist, sexist, homophobic.

Policy Framework

Has the policy been developed in response to statutory requirements, legal advice or on the basis of any other professional advice? Does this affect the discretion available to Council to amend the policy?

No

Are any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the policy? If so, please outline.

The policy is intended to benefit all employees regardless of equality group they fall within. The aim of the policy is to clearly set out how the Council social media sites should be set up, managed effectively and how any risks or pitfalls should be managed. As stated above however, the policy specifically outlines the Council House Rules for Facebook and states that the Council reserves the right to remove comments, without notification, which we deem to be:
   • Racist, sexist, homophobic

Who initiated or wrote the policy (if Council decision, please state). Who is responsible for implementing the policy?

Who initiated or wrote policy?	Who is responsible for implementation?
Claire Shields - Communications Officer	The Council is responsible for implementation

Are there any factors which might contribute to or detract from the implementation of the policy (e.g. financial, legislative, other)?

No

Main stakeholders in relation to the policy
Please list main stakeholders affected by the policy (e.g. staff, service users, other statutory bodies, community or voluntary sector, private sector)

Staff members, Ratepayers and General Population

Are there any other policies with a bearing on this policy? If so, please identify them and how they impact on this policy.

Social Media Policy for the Employees

Available Evidence

Council should ensure that its screening decisions are informed by relevant data. What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

Section 75 category	Evidence
Religious belief	N/A
Political opinion	N/A
Racial group	N/A
Age	N/A
Marital status	N/A
Sexual orientation	N/A
Men and women generally	N/A
Disability	N/A
Dependants	N/A

Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information gathered above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories in relation to this particular policy/decision?

Section 75 category	Needs, experiences and priorities
Religious belief	N/A
Political opinion	N/A
Racial group	N/A
Age	N/A
Marital status	N/A
Sexual orientation	N/A
Men and women generally	N/A
Disability	N/A
Dependants	N/A

Screening Questions

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy for each of the Section 75 categories?

Category	Policy Impact	Level of impact (Major/minor/none)
Religious belief	There are no specific impacts on any of the equality categories	None
Political opinion		None
Racial group		None
Age		None
Marital status		None
Sexual orientation		None
Men and women generally		None
Disability		None
Dependents		None

2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 categories?

Category	If yes, provide details	If no, provide reasons
Religious belief		No
Political opinion		No
Racial group		No
Age		No
Marital status		No
Sexual orientation		No
Men and women generally		No
Disability		No
Dependents		No

3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion, or racial group?

Category	Details of Policy Impact	Level of impact (major/minor/none)
Religious belief		None
Political opinion		None
Racial group		None

4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?		
Category	If yes, provide details	If no, provide reasons
Religious belief		No
Political opinion		No
Racial group		No

Multiple Identity

Generally speaking, people fall into more than one Section 75 category (for example: disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; young lesbian, gay and bisexual people). Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant s75 categories concerned.

No specific impacts have been identified for people with multiple identities. The policy will affect all employees regardless of what equality category they fall within.

Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006

Is there an opportunity for the policy to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?

N/A

Is there an opportunity for the policy to encourage participation by disabled people in public life?

N/A

Screening Decision

A: NO IMPACT IDENTIFIED ON ANY CATEGORY – EQIA UNNECESSARY

Please identify reasons for this below

The aim of this policy was to clearly set out how Council social media sites should be set up, managed effectively and how any risks or pitfalls should be managed. It is intended to benefit all employees regardless of equality group they fall within. However, the policy specifically outlines the Council House Rules for Facebook and states that the Council reserves the right to remove comments, without notification, which we deem to be:
- Racist, sexist, homophobic

B: MINOR IMPACT IDENTIFIED – EQIA NOT CONSIDERED NECESSARY AS IMPACT CAN BE ELIMINATED OR MITIGATED

Where the impact is likely to be minor, you should consider if the policy can be mitigated or an alternative policy introduced. If so, EQIA may not be considered necessary. You must indicate the reasons for this decision below, together with details of measures to mitigate the adverse impact or the alternative policy proposed.

C: MAJOR IMPACT IDENTIFIED – EQIA REQUIRED

If the decision is to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

Timetabling and Prioritising

If the policy has been screened in for equality impact assessment, please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3 with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority criterion	Rating (1-3)
Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations	
Social need	
Effect on people's daily lives	

The total rating score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the council in timetabling its EQIAs.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities? If yes, please give details.

Monitoring

Effective monitoring will help the authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy. It is recommended that where a policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced to mitigate adverse impact, monitoring be undertaken on a broader basis to identify any impact (positive or adverse).

Further information on monitoring is available in the Equality Commission's guidance on monitoring.

Identify how the impact of the policy is to be monitored

The Council will keep a log of all access details and will monitor the use of social media to ensure compliancy with Council policies and guidelines and in support of security and criminal investigations. This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Approval and Authorisation

A copy of the screening form for each policy screened should be signed off by the senior manager responsible for that policy. The screening recommendation should be reported to the relevant Committee/Council when the policy is submitted for approval.

Screened by	Position/Job title	Date
Claire Shields	Communications Officer	27.01.2015

Approved by	Position/Job Title	Date
Roger Wilson	Chief Executive	28.01.2015

Please forward a copy of the completed form with policy attached to either mary.hanna@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk or Stephanie.harte@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk who will ensure that screening forms and policies are available on the Council website.

These officers are also responsible for issuing reports on a quarterly basis on those policies "screened out for EQIA". This allows stakeholders who disagree with this recommendation to submit their views. In the event of any stakeholder disagreeing with the decision to screen out any policy, the screening exercise will be reviewed.