



West Lindsey District Council

Social Media Policy

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1. About this Policy

This policy is in place to minimise the risks to our business through use of social media.

This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Wikipedia, Instagram, Vine, Tumblr and all other social networking sites, internet postings and blogs. It applies to use of social media for business purposes as well as personal use that may affect our business in any way.

This policy covers all employees working at all levels. It also applies to other individuals working with WLDC including consultants, contractors, agency staff, volunteers and any other individual who has access to our electronic communication system and equipment.

All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media should be reported to your manager in the first instance, the Senior Communications Officer or the Human Resources Team.

2. Risks

The council recognises that there are risks associated with users accessing and handling information in order to conduct official council business.

This policy aims to mitigate the following risks:

- Employees sharing false information in public forums;
- The loss or exposure of confidential information; and
- Increased exposure to litigation.

3. Employee Social Media Acceptable Use Policy

3.1 Overview

The council recognises that there are legitimate business and personal reasons for using social media at work or using corporate computing resources. To enable employees to take advantage of the value of these sites and to promote an open, trusting, collaborative workplace, West Lindsey District Council's policy allows all employees to use social media within the guidelines specified below.

3.2 What is Social Media?

Social media includes any web site in which visitors are able to publish information to a larger group. Information shared may include (but is not limited to) personal information, opinions, research, commentary, or business information. Examples of such destinations include large branded entities such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn. However, blogs, special interest forums, user communities are also considered social media.

Staff should never provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites, as such references, positive and negative, can be attributed to the organisation and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the Council. – new section

3.3 Inappropriate Content

While social media contains legitimate business and personal content, they also include content that is inappropriate for the workplace including nudity, violence, drugs, sex, and gambling. **Therefore, the same inappropriate content policy that applies to the broader web, also applies to content found within social media.**

Inappropriate content should not be accessed by employees while at work, or while using council resources. Employees should use common sense and consideration for others in deciding which content is appropriate for the workplace. In addition, the council employs technical controls to provide reminders, audit, and enforce this policy.

3.4 Productivity

The council recognises that employees have a need, at times, to conduct personal business within social media while at work or using council resources. Therefore, the council allows limited access to non-business social media content. For example, employees are allowed to access personal communications applications, email, and blog content within social media during authorised breaks. It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that personal business does not affect work quality or productivity. **This policy is consistent with the council's Internet Acceptable Use Policy defined for the broader web outside of social media.** The council employs technical controls to provide reminders, audit, and enforce this policy.

Where employees are found to have accessed social media outside of authorised break times, they may be subject to disciplinary action in line with the council's disciplinary policy. – new section

3.5 Personal Use of Social Media at the Workplace and at Home

This section of the guidelines provides guidance on the use of social media tools by council officers in a personal capacity. For example this includes a

personal profile on Facebook or use of Twitter in a personal capacity by council officers. This includes personal use at work and at home.

- Employees using the council's resources to access social media sites must make sure that their online activities do not interfere with their job, colleagues or commitments to customers.
- When using social media, employees should respect their audience. As a general rule, employees should be mindful of any detrimental comments made about colleagues whilst using social media. Any conduct which breaches the Employee Code of Conduct such as failing to show dignity at work (harassment), discriminatory language, personal insults, obscenity, and disclosure of confidential information will be considered a disciplinary matter. These examples are not exhaustive.
- Employees should also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory – such as politics and religion.
- Employees must be aware of their association with West Lindsey District Council when using social media. **If they identify themselves as a West Lindsey District Council employee, they should ensure that their profile and any related content is consistent with how they would wish to present themselves with colleagues and customers.**
- Employees who may not directly identify themselves as a council employee when using social media for personal purposes at work or at home, should be aware that content they post on social media websites could still be construed as relevant to their employment at the council. For example, employees should not normally write or report on conversations, meetings or matters that are meant to be private or internal to West Lindsey District Council. Nor should employees publish council documents on their personal social networking sites. Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information would constitute misconduct/gross-misconduct in accordance with the council's disciplinary policy. Employees should not cite or refer to customers, partners or suppliers without their written approval. If it is necessary to include a reference, where possible, link back to the source.
- **You must not express opinions on the council's behalf via social media, unless expressly authorised to do so by your manager. Such authorisation may only be obtained following relevant training. – new section**
- **You must not post comments about sensitive business-related topics, such as our performance, or do anything to jeopardise confidential information. You must not include our logos or other trademarks in any social media posting or in your profile on any social media. – new section**

The council will not accept liability for any actions arising out of employee's personal use of social networking sites.

The council will monitor the use of social networking sites to make sure that any use by employees complies with its internet policy.

4 Content Publishing and Confidential Information Policy

4.1 Authorisation to Represent the Council in Social Media

Only those persons officially designated by West Lindsey District Council have the authorisation to represent the council on employee sponsored social media pages or other social media pages. For a list of users and groups authorised to represent the council, contact People & Organisational Development Team. If and when members of the council engage in advocacy for the council and have the authorisation to participate in social media, they should identify themselves as such.

Enquiries or requests for information from visitors to council-sponsored social media sites (not personal social media sites), including requests from bloggers, could fall within the Freedom of Information Act. Managers of council-sponsored social media sites (such as the West Lindsey District Council Facebook page official) should be particularly alert to identifying potential requests and be ready to deal with them in a timely and appropriate manner (the council must normally respond to requests within 20 days). If answers can be provided immediately then the council's social site manager should provide the answer and does not have to notify FOI or log the request. The request should always be forwarded to FOI, however, if:

- the site manager cannot, or is unsure whether to, answer the request; or where an exemption might apply
- the request cannot be answered immediately; or
- the requestor has specifically requested the information to be provided under the Freedom of Information Act.

4.2 Content Publishing and Confidentiality Guidelines

The following are policy guidelines regarding what you should and should not do when publishing content in social media. These guidelines apply to all social media publishing whether personal or council-sponsored. Employees are responsible for content they publish in social media and can be held personally liable for content published. Employees can also be subject to disciplinary action by West Lindsey District Council for publishing inappropriate or confidential content. These guidelines only cover a sample of

all possible content publishing scenarios and are not a substitute for good judgment.

- DO know and follow all privacy and confidentiality guidelines in the West Lindsey District Council Officer Code of Conduct (All policies available on Minerva). All guidelines in the handbook, as well as laws such as copyright, fair use and financial disclosure laws apply to social media.
- DO be aware that content on such social media websites may be subject to Freedom of Information requests.
- DO NOT disclose or use West Lindsey District Council confidential or proprietary information or that of any other person or council. For example, ask permission before posting someone's picture in a social network or publishing in a blog a conversation that was meant to be private.
- DO NOT comment on West Lindsey District Council on confidential financial information such as future business performance or business plans.
- DO NOT publish council documents on personal social networking sites.
- DO NOT cite or reference customers, partners or suppliers without their written approval.
- DO identify yourself. Some individuals work anonymously, using pseudonyms or false screen names. West Lindsey District Council discourages that practice.
- DO be professional. You are connected to your colleagues, managers and even West Lindsey District Council customers. You should ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work at West Lindsey District Council.
- DO ask permission – to publish or report on conversations that are meant to be private or internal to West Lindsey District Council and when in doubt, always ask permission from Legal Services.
- DO speak in the first person when engaging in personal social media communications. Make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of West Lindsey District Council.
- DO use a disclaimer – If you publish personal social media communications and it has something to do with the work you do or subjects associated with West Lindsey District Council, use a disclaimer such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent those of West Lindsey District Council."
- DO link back to the source – When you do make a reference to a customer, partner or supplier, where possible link back to the source.

- DO use your best judgment – Remember that there are always consequences to what you publish. If you're about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, review the suggestions above and think about why that is. If you're still unsure, and it is related to West Lindsey District Council business, feel free to discuss it with your manager or simply do not publish it. You have sole responsibility for what you post to your blog or publish in any form of social media.
- DO NOT use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the West Lindsey District Council workplace. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory.
- DO NOT conduct confidential business with a customer or partner business through your personal or other social media.
- DO NOT register accounts using the West Lindsey District Council brand name or any other unregistered or registered trademarks.
- DO remember that West Lindsey District Council's reputation is heavily influenced by its people and what is published will reflect on the council's reputation.

West Lindsey District Council employs technical controls to provide reminders, monitor, and enforce these guidelines.

4.3 Malware and Online Crime Prevention

Social media is commonly used by the online criminal community to deliver malware and carry out schemes designed to damage property or steal confidential information. To minimise risk related to such threats, adhere to the following guidelines. While these guidelines help to reduce risk, they do not cover all possible threats and are not a substitute for good judgment.

- Do not use the same passwords for social media that you use to access council computing resources.
- Do consider setting browser privacy and security settings to HIGH.
- Do not follow links on Social media pages posted by individuals or organisations that you do not know.
- Do not download software posted or recommended by individuals or organisations that you do not know.
- If any content you find on any social media Web page looks suspicious in any way, close your browser and do not return to that page.
- Configure social media accounts to encrypt communications whenever possible. Facebook, Twitter and others support encryption as an

option. This is extremely important for roaming users who connect via public Wi-Fi networks.

- Beware of “Frapping” (where another person makes comical, embarrassing, or even illegal changes to your social networking profile when you leave it open and unattended). Remember, this applies just as much to a Smartphone as it does to a PC or laptop.

West Lindsey District Council employs technical controls to provide reminders, audit, and enforce these guidelines.

5 Breach of the Policy

Any breach of this policy must be reported and investigated in line with the Information Security Incident Management Policy and associated procedures.

In line with the Information Security Incident Management Policy, the council will always treat any breach as a serious issue that may result in disciplinary action in line with the council’s Disciplinary Policy. Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to cooperate with our investigation, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details. – new section

You may be required to remove any social media content that we consider to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action. – new section

Each incident will be investigated and judged on its individual circumstances in line with the Officer Code of Conduct or, in the case of elected members, the Members’ Code of Conduct.

Policy Statement

West Lindsey District Council has a commitment to equal opportunities. It seeks to ensure that no potential or current employee receives less favourable treatment than another on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

If you would like a copy of this leaflet in large clear print, audio, Braille or in another language, please telephone **01427 676676**

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