



## Social Networking Policy

	<p>Other Implications:</p> <p>None.</p>
Recommendation	It is recommend that the Staffing Committee approve the revised policy to take effect from 1 January 2017.
Reason for Recommendation	The Staffing Committee oversee matters relating to staff terms and conditions and people management policies.
Appendices	Appendix 1 – Revised Social Networking Policy
Background Papers	None
Officer Contact	Name: Sarah Butcher, Principal HR & OD Adviser Tel: 01305 228505 Email: <a href="mailto:s.e.butcher@dorsetcc.gov.uk">s.e.butcher@dorsetcc.gov.uk</a>

## Social Networking Policy

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This report summarises the rationale for revising the existing social networking policy. A proposed new policy is attached.
- 1.2. The current policy has been in place since 2010. Changes are as a result of feedback from colleagues who are using the policy when managing concerns about inappropriate use of social networking.
- 1.3. The proposed changes reflect a modern workplace, following the roll out of the Smarter Computing project which introduced the council's new intranet 'Sharepoint'. Sharepoint provides and encourages a range of opportunities for internal social networking and many employees are using Sharepoint to share their personal opinions about council news.
- 1.4. Employees are able to publish blogs, news items and to update their personal profiles without the support of the council's Communications team. Whilst the Communications team can remove inappropriate comments, the expectation is on the individual employee to make appropriate use of the technology. Employees are now able to access the intranet across a range of mobile devices.
- 1.5. The revised policy provides clarification around:
  - appropriate use of social media in all its forms
  - appropriate use of working time
  - confidentiality and sharing of information posted on Sharepoint
  - the use of Sharepoint blogs
- 1.6. The revised policy has been developed in consultation with the council's Communications team and is designed to support associated guidance about appropriate use of Sharepoint.
- 1.7. The policy is being revised at the same time as a review of the Staff Code of Conduct to ensure a consistent message.

### **2. Next Steps**

- 3.1 In order that the new policy is applied consistently, there will be communications to all staff, including via the all staff e-newsletter, the manager e-newsletter and a front page news item on Sharepoint. Managers will be expected to ensure that all staff are aware of the revised policy.

**Sheralyn Huntingford**  
**Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development**

November 2016

## Social Networking Policy

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Social networking is a common form of communication, both for personal and business purposes. This Policy sets out guidelines about employees' use of social networking, for business and for personal use.
- 1.2. The council's social networking policy helps protect the council's reputation as well as customers, partners and others connected with the council. It is important to maintain confidentiality and respect others' privacy.
- 1.3. Our values for working online are the same as those when working offline. Social networking must be undertaken in accordance with the [guidance on appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking sites](#); [guidance on the council's social media channels](#) and the ICT Services [Acceptable Use Policy](#).

### 2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to all council employees, excluding schools based staff. A separate policy applies to schools based staff recognising the delegated powers of governing bodies.
- 2.2. This policy has been developed in consultation with the recognised trade unions.
- 2.3. For the purposes of this policy, social networking is defined as participating in any online forum where information can be shared instantly and publicly with any number of others. Examples include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. This policy also covers participating in a blog and use of image sharing websites such as YouTube and Flickr.
- 2.4. This policy applies to external and internal social networking and includes the use of the council's intranet (Sharepoint) and Skype instant messaging.
- 2.5. This policy applies irrespective of how the social networking site is accessed including, but not limited to, access via work or personal computers, laptops, tablets or mobile phones.
- 2.6. The principles apply to both business and personal use, particularly where it may be possible to identify an individual as an employee of the council.

### 3. Key Principles

- 3.1. Employees may contribute to the council's social media activities, for example by [writing a blog](#) or managing a work related Facebook account, however employees must be aware at all times that they are representing the organisation. Employees should always obtain permission from their manager before embarking on a social media campaign and should do so with advice from the council's communications team. Unless it's part of their job, employees should use Sharepoint's blog function in their own time.
- 3.2. Employees talking online about work related matters within their area of job responsibility should identify themselves as a council employee just as they would do

## Appendix 1

so in a similar situation offline. Unless an employee is authorised to speak on behalf of the council, they should state that the views expressed are their own and should only refer to others connected with the council if they have first obtained their express permission to do so.

- 3.3. The reputation and / or business of the council, customers, partners or others connected with the council must not be brought into disrepute through use of social networking. This includes internal media, such as using Sharepoint to post news items or blogs.
- 3.4. Use of social networking sites must at all times be consistent with the council's duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults, in accordance with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and the [guidance on appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking sites](#).
- 3.5. During the course of their work, employees using social networking sites for business purposes must maintain political neutrality and not indicate individual political opinions, in accordance with the [Code of Conduct for Staff](#). Where applicable, employees must take account of the political restrictions applying to their post. In this case, employees must maintain political neutrality whether use of social networking is for business or personal purposes.
- 3.6. Confidentiality of matters relating to Dorset County Council or others connected to the council must be maintained, so that the council is not exposed to legal risks covered by copyright, data protection, libel and Freedom of Information legislation. Employees are expected to understand that if information is not already public information, it should not be shared without express permission.
- 3.7. Employees must not use social networks to conduct themselves in a way which would otherwise be inappropriate in the workplace, for example by posting information which constitutes bullying or harassment, by uploading information which may be interpreted as discriminatory or of an otherwise offensive nature or by criticising customers or colleagues.
- 3.8. Whilst employees who make use of social media in a personal capacity are not acting on behalf of the council, employees must be aware that they can damage the council's reputation if they are recognised as being an employee. Where it may be possible to identify an individual as an employee of the council, it should be clear that information contained is the individual's personal opinion.
- 3.9. The intention of Sharepoint is that managers and staff can share their views in a safe environment. The council supports positive use of Sharepoint. It is for an employee to choose whether or not to post a comment on Sharepoint. Before doing so, they should refer to the guidelines for [commenting on the intranet](#).
- 3.10. Information shared internally on Sharepoint is not intended to be shared more publically, including the sharing of any comments with the media. External communications with the media are managed by the council's communications team.
- 3.11. When employees associate themselves with the council as their employer, for example on a Linked-in profile, they are responsible for ensuring that their profile is consistent with how they would wish to present themselves with customers and colleagues.

## Appendix 1

- 3.12. It is an individual's responsibility to read the terms of service of any social networking site they use and to ensure that any privacy settings about who might see the information are understood.
- 3.13. Council email addresses must not be used when posting comments on social networking sites where this is unrelated to work. The same applies to the use of any logo owned by or associated with the council on a personal site.
- 3.14. When using social networking sites, the right of freedom of expression applies only to lawful conduct. The council expects that employees will exercise consideration for the rights of others and for the reputation of the council.
- 3.15. Personal use of social networking sites should not be undertaken during working time, as outlined in the [ICT Acceptable Use Policy](#).
- 3.16. Employees' use of social networking for work related purposes must not be disproportionate use of working time and must not be to the detriment of their substantive duties. Managers are expected to ensure that employees are using their time effectively and to raise any concerns with individuals.
- 3.17. The council reserves the right to monitor employees' internet usage in relation to time spent on social networking sites. Internet usage may be monitored where there is reason to believe that the employee has acted in breach of this policy. If an employee posts an inappropriate comment on Sharepoint, their manager may be alerted.

### **4. Disciplinary Action**

- 4.1. Use of social media which is not in accordance with this policy or other council policies may amount to misconduct or gross misconduct under the [disciplinary policy and procedure](#), including use which constitutes bullying or harassment of another employee.
- 4.2. Where there is an impact on the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults, the [managing allegations guidance](#) must be followed in conjunction with this policy.

### **6. Diversity**

- 6.1 The Policy will at all times be applied in accordance with the council's diversity policy, which states:

“The County Council is committed to diversity and equality of opportunity so that no employee will be subject to unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, marital or civil partnership status, colour, race, nationality or other ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, criminal background, membership or non-membership of a trade union or political beliefs.”