

	Web and Social Media Policy BROADSTAIRS & St. PETER'S TOWN COUNCIL
	Adopted 24th July 2017 Reviewed: July 2025 Approved: 28th July 2025

1. Introduction

The aim of this Policy is to set out guidance to Councillors, Council Staff and anyone affiliated with the Town Council including volunteers or external contractors under contract with the Town Council, on the use of the Town Council Website and online communications, collectively referred to as social media.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Public Relation (PR) Policy and the Media Policy.

2. Policy Purpose

This policy helps people make the right decisions about the use of digital communications and understand the impact should they get it wrong. It outlines the standards we expect when using social media and publishing things on the web, how we will monitor use and what will happen if it is used inappropriately.

3. Scope of Policy

This policy will cover the following digital communications:

- Town Council website www.broadstairs.gov.uk
- social media* when the accounts or comments relate to Broadstairs & St. Peter's Town Council
- e-mails sent from accounts ending in @broadstairs.gov.uk
- blogs, wikis, podcasts, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles, when the accounts or comments relate to Broadstairs & St. Peter's Town Council.

* Social media includes all social networking sites, including but not exclusive to, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Flickr, etc.

4. Responsibility for Implementation of the Policy

All Town Councillors, employees, volunteers or external contractors under contract with the Town Council, are responsible for their own compliance with this policy and for ensuring that it is consistently applied to protect the privacy, confidentiality, reputation and interests of Broadstairs & St. Peter's Town Council.

A Web and Social Media Register is attached at Appendix 1, which must be signed by any person given administration rights to a social media platform before they can post or comment on any social media platforms being hosted by the Town Council.

Anything uploaded onto the Website or a Social Media platform is evidence of the council's work, and may be used for reference by others in future or subject to a Freedom of Information Request. Therefore, content must follow copyright and data protection laws.

5. Procedures

5.1 Website

The Town Council website can be updated by any employee that has been given permission by the Town Clerk.

The Town Council website should be kept up-to-date and contain and display the most up-to-date and relevant information regarding the Town Council's activities and procedures.

Any content should be written in plain English, so that it is usable and accessible to everyone, regardless of their language and vocabulary skills. All text must be checked for spellings and grammatical errors before it is published to the website.

Any content that is found to be against these guidelines should be reported to the Town Clerk in the first instance.

5.2 Social Media

The Town Clerk will be the main account holder for any social media accounts. The Town Clerk can give administration rights to employees of the Town Council that have read and signed the Social Media Agreement form.

5.2.1 Posting content/comments:

- a) The main purpose of any social media account being run by the Town Council should be to provide details of news, Town Council events and service updates only.
- b) A social media account being run by the Town Council should be checked at least once a day during the working week. This can be undertaken by either the Town Clerk or someone with administration rights.
- c) Content uploaded, posted or forwarded that contains any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content, this includes against colleagues, members of the public or Broadstairs & St. Peter's Town Council as an organisation, will result in disciplinary action.
- d) Any comments made on social media should not disclose commercially sensitive, anti-competitive, private or confidential information. When making use of any social media platform (e.g. Facebook), their terms of use must also be complied with.
- e) During periods of purdah, the six-week run up to an election - Local, General or European – the council should not do or say anything that could be seen in any way to support any political party or candidate. Therefore, during this period social media content will consist of important service announcements only.

5.2.2 Responding to content/comments received via social media:

- a) If a comment made by an external party is found to be offensive in terms of language or sentiment, this should be removed or hidden if the social media platform provides this functionality.
- b) The Town Council should avoid, where possible, having lengthy online dialogue with people posting content or comments.
- c) Where content/comments are received relating to a post from the Town Council, the representative of the Town Council should reply "this comment was responded to via a private message" and then respond privately accordingly.

- d) Councillors or parishioners who have any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should report them to the Town Clerk. Anyone who feels that they have been harassed, bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded should inform the Town Clerk who will investigate the matter.
- e) Where contentious comments are received, these should be answered in accordance with the Town Council's complaints procedure.

5.3 Email:

All emails relating to Town Council business should be sent with the following disclaimer "This email and any attachments are confidential and intended solely for the addressee and may also be privileged or exempt from disclosure under applicable law. If you are not the addressee, or have received this email in error, please notify the sender immediately, delete it from your system and do not copy, disclose or otherwise act upon any part of this email or its attachments. Any views expressed in this email are those of the individual sender, except where the sender specifies and with authority, states them to be the views of Broadstairs and St. Peter's Town Council."

5.4 Blogs, wikis, podcasts, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles:

Only the Town Clerk has permission to post content on any of the platforms named at 5.4

6. If a web or social media account is hacked

If any email, web content account or social media account hosted by the Town Council gets hacked, the passwords for that account should be changed as soon as possible by anyone who has administration rights to that account. Any offensive or spam messages sent from the account should be deleted and then the incident reported to the Town Clerk, who may wish to disable the account.

7. Failure to comply with the Policy

It's always possible to make a mistake and get it wrong. If this happens tell the Town Clerk in the first instance, who will, along with the Chairman, decide on remedial action to avoid embarrassment and reputational damage to the Town Council.

Where evidence of misuse is found, the Town Clerk will undertake a more detailed investigation. If the misuse is considered deliberate, the Town Council may undertake action in line with the most current disciplinary procedure, currently the Town Council uses the ACAS 2015 Code of Practice On Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure.

Misuse can also, in certain circumstances, become a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and the organisation. If necessary, The Town Council may hand over information to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.

8. Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Town Clerk 2 yearly. If any changes are needed these will be reported at a meeting of the Council.

Appendix 1:



BROADSTAIRS & ST. PETER'S
TOWN COUNCIL

Web and Social Media Policy Register

I confirm that I have read and agreed to the contents of the Broadstairs and St. Peter's Town Council Web and Social Media Policy

Name	Signed	Date