

Social Media Policy

RESPONSIBLE COMMITTEE: P&F

This is a policy/procedure document of Saltash Town Council to be followed by both Town Council Members and Employees.

Current Document Status			
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Document Retention Period
Until superseded

Social Media Policy

“If your Town Council isn't using Facebook, test the water. It's a great way of getting information out to people. Used well, it can cut calls to your contact centre. But it isn't just about marketing. It's not simply for customer service and it's not solely about engagement either. It's all of those things. It's about bringing Town Councils closer to the communities we serve” - Sandwell Town Council's Press Officer.

Section A: Operation of policy

1. This policy will be reviewed every 6 months by the Working Group who will recommend any changes to Town Council.
2. Minor changes can be implemented by agreement of Town Clerk / Working Group Chairman – for example minor additions to content, modifications to style, experimenting with different media etc.

Section B: Aims of use of social media

The aims of the Town Council's expansion into social media include:

- To meet the requirement for communication as part of Quality Town Council Status.
- To communicate with more people, including younger people.
- To provide information for people who can't get to the Guildhall.
- To provide an alternative way for residents to communicate views, issues and question, bearing in mind that some are more comfortable communicating online.
- To promote tourism.
- To provide positive publicity for the town, town centre, town organisations, town events and Town Council.
- Town centre promotion.
- To receive residents views and issues.
- To promote two-way communication and consultation.
- Potentially in future to broadcast Town Council meetings, increasing 'attendance' and awareness.

Section C: Types of Social Media

1. STC will use appropriate social media channels including Facebook/Instagram (a business page, as opposed to a personal account with 'friends') and will own an X account but leave it dormant.
2. STC will potentially expand into use of a blog (allowing Town Councillors to post personal projects and views).
3. In the medium term STC will consider the use of podcasting and a YouTube Channel.

Section D: Responsibilities & appropriate use

1. Social Media channels will be the responsibility of the Communications and Engagement Officer assisted by those other staff members who have been trained. They will be registered 'administrators' for the Facebook page and will have the username and password for the X Account, and will assist in promoting the pages (see Section H).

Social Media strategy, planning and implementation will be a fundamental part of the Communications and Engagement Officer's role.

The Town Clerk will monitor and offer guidance as required.

2. Town Councillors will not be involved in 'official posting' but are encouraged to promote the pages (see Section H).
3. Official posts must conform to the content and style guidelines below.
4. Town Councillor posts, or staff posts in their own time, must make clear whether any opinions posted are either official STC policy or their own personal view.

Section F: Administration guidelines

1. In general, STC will only 'like' or follow organisations who provide information related to public services or public transport that is likely to be of interest to residents of Saltash, and will otherwise not 'like' or 'follow' other pages and users of social media.
2. STC will reply as appropriate where posts are not abusive/using inappropriate language.
3. Users who do post abusively or using inappropriate language will be warned once and then blocked or banned.
4. These guidelines will be posted on the Facebook/Instagram.

5. All scheduled social media posts to be posted at 8am-1pm-4pm-7pm-9pm.

Section G: Content & style guidelines

1. If unsure on any point of content or style consult the Communications and Engagement Officer in the first instance and then the Development and Engagement Manager, or the Chairman of the Working Group.
2. Official posts must express no personal opinions: only factual information or Town Council policy.
3. In general, anything that would be allowed on the STC noticeboards will be allowed on appropriate social media channels.
 - 3.1. General content should include:
 - 3.1.1. Regular items
 - 3.1.2. Next meeting: main topics.
 - 3.1.3. Major town events.
 - 3.1.4. Photos from events/engagement if available.
 - 3.2. As and when items
 - 3.2.1. Consultations.
 - 3.2.2. Elections – reminder when and where to vote.
 - 3.2.3. Important public information (school closures, road closures etc.).
 - 3.3. Periodic reminders
 - 3.3.1. Allotments.
 - 3.3.2. Guildhall hire.
 - 3.3.3. Festival fund.
 - 3.3.4. Community chest.
 - 3.3.5. Noticeboards.
4. Post using 'we' rather than 'I'.
5. Try to spread posts – too close together and it may bore people, or they won't see everything you share. Over-posting can put people off, especially on Facebook.
6. Postings should be in plain everyday English not 'Town Council speak' – for example 'snow' not 'inclement weather' and 'budget setting' rather than 'precepting'.

7. Add photographs where possible. Avoid using photographs that clearly identify under-18s unless they are supplied by organisations with clear child protection procedures (such as schools or sports clubs).
8. If a post requires a response of general interest (e.g. about a road closure) post or tweet to everyone. If it requires an individual response (e.g. about a casework issue) message them on Facebook or appropriate social media (as replying individually requires 'following').
9. When replying to queries or comments speak as you would to a customer in person or on the phone.
10. If a query relates to something that STC doesn't deal with try to give as much information as possible about who to contact (e.g. officer name if possible). Remember that as they are already online a link to a web page or email address may be better than a phone number.

Section H Promotion

STC staff and members will aim to promote the Facebook account (to get 'likes') and the Twitter account (to get 'followers') via

1. Town Messenger.
2. STC Website.
3. STC Noticeboards.
4. Suggestions on Facebook.
5. Word of mouth.
6. Other appropriate ways as agreed.