

Dursley Town Council – Social Media & Electronic Communications Policy Adopted 4th August 2015

Introduction

The use of a website, social media and electronic communication enables Dursley Town Council to interact in a way that improves the communications both within the Town Council and between the Town Council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

Dursley Town Council has a website, a facebook page and uses email to communicate. The Town Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications.

Over time the Town Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur this Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

Our rules and expectation

The following refers to employees and councillors accessing social media as part of their role/employment.

1. Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any other council policies or expected standards of behaviour at work.
2. The use of social media should not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content (see below) and must not interfere with employee's duties or performance. Employees may be required to remove content which is considered to be in breach of this policy.
3. Information that will bring the council into disrepute is not to be discussed, referred to or stated on any internet website or any other social media channel.
4. The Dursley Town Council Logo must never be used when publishing information on websites unless permission has been given by the Mayor or Town Clerk.
5. Individuals (including councillors, employees and their families) must not be named, described nor have their photos published on any website, without their express permission being given in writing.
6. Councillors/employees should not comment on council matters until after any official announcement/statement by the Town Clerk or Mayor.

Employees and councillors should ensure that any communications from the Town Council will meet the following criteria:

- be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright;
- not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;
- if official council business it will be moderated by either the Mayor or the Clerk to the Town Council.
- social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising

Equally, we expect any communications to the Town Council to meet the following criteria:

- be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- not contain content copied from elsewhere, for which the enquirer does not own the copyright;
- not sending large volumes of the same message (also called "spamming");
- not to contain anyone's personal information, other than necessary basic contact details.

Dursley Town Council's response to any communications received not meeting the above criteria will be to either moderate or edit the text, delete, inform the sender of our policy or send a brief response as appropriate.

This will be at the Council's discretion based on the message received, given our limited resources available.

Any information posted on the facebook page not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. Repeat offenders will be blocked from the facebook page.

Personal Use.

The council respects the right of employees and councillors to freedom of expression, private and family life and therefore the intention is not to interfere with this right.

However the following must be noted:

1. Employees and councillors must make it clear when publishing content online that they are speaking on their own behalf by writing in the first person and using a personal email address. Remember that what you publish has the potential to be accessed for many years, even after the original content has been removed.
2. Information or remarks that will bring the council into disrepute are not to be discussed, referred to or stated on any internet website or online tool. However the council recognises that certain comments may amount to a 'protected disclosure' under laws on whistle blowing, which would give protective rights to the employee.

3. Publishing personal content should not be made using any Dursley Town Council email addresses or logos unless on an authorised site. All information on social media is subject to Freedom of Information requests so be aware of the council's liabilities. If in doubt check with the Town Clerk.
4. Individuals (including councillors, employees or their families) must not be named, described nor have their photos published on any website, without their express permission being given. However this does not apply where colleagues have an association through social media.
5. Please be aware the press may quote you from any public posts you make on social media, whether or not you are making them in your capacity as councillor or employee of the council. It is advisable to check your privacy settings and refrain from posting while tired or under the influence of alcohol.

Town Council website www.dursleytowncouncil.gov.uk

Where necessary, we may direct those contacting us to our website to see the required information, or we may forward their question to one of our Town Councillors for consideration and response.

We may not respond to every comment we receive particularly if we are experiencing a heavy workload.

The Town Council may, at its discretion, allow and enable approved local groups to have a presence on its website for the purpose of presenting information about the group's activities.

The local group would be responsible for ensuring that the information supplied to Dursley Town Council is relevant and up to date and that any links from the website are valid.

With reference to the town council's media communications policy any official statements or announcements will continue to be made by Town Clerk or Mayor on social media and the website.