

# Horley Town Council

## Social Networking Policy

### Introduction

“**Social Networking**” is the term used for the current wave of online tools, websites and interactive media that enable users to interact with each other in various ways, through sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Social networking involves building online communities or networks, which encourage participation, dialogue and involvement.

As Horley Town Council becomes more involved with such communication, we need to set clear guidelines for using social media sites to ensure they are used effectively as part of a wider communications mix. Their usage must not expose the Council to security risks or reputational damage. Therefore this policy will manage and regulate the corporate use of social media and act alongside the existing press protocol adopted in 2010.

### Current Networking Sites

The town council currently has accounts in the following networking sites:

-  **Flickr**
-  **LinkedIn**
-  **Twitter**

This list is likely to expand as other interactive media sites are introduced.

### Purpose and Aim of Policy

Social media offers great potential for building relationships and improving the services that the town council provides. This policy will clearly set out how social media can be managed effectively and how any risks or pitfalls can be avoided or mitigated.

As with any online activity there are often risks associated, the following types of risk have been identified with social media use:

- Virus or other malware (malicious software) infection from infected sites.
- Disclosure of confidential information.
- Damage to the reputation of the Council.

- Social engineering attacks (*this is the act of manipulating people into disclosing confidential material or carrying out certain actions. Social engineering is often conducted by individuals fraudulently claiming to be a business or client*).
- Civil or criminal action relating to breaches of legislation.
- Breach of safeguarding.

In light of these risks, we need to regulate the use of social media sites and ensure that such use does not damage the Council, its employees, partners and the people it serves.

The aim of this policy is to ensure:

- Engagement with individuals and communities and successful promotion of council-based services through the use of social media.
- A consistent and corporate approach is adopted and maintained in the use of social media.
- That Council information remains secure and is not compromised through the use of social media.
- That users operate within existing policies, guidelines and relevant legislation.
- That the Council's reputation is not damaged or adversely affected.

## **Scope**

This policy applies to all employees and elected Members.

## **Policy Statement**

This policy provides a structured approach to using social media and will ensure that it is effective, lawful and does not compromise Council information or computer systems/networks.

## **Responsibilities of Members and Officers**

The following guidelines will apply to online participation and set out the standards of behavior expected as a representative of Horley Town Council:

1. Be aware of and recognize your responsibilities identified in the Social Media Policy.

2. Remember that you are personally responsible for the content you publish on any form of social media on behalf of the Council.
3. Never give out the personal details, such as home address and telephone numbers, of any person unless you have their express consent. Ensure that you handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the Council's Data Protection Policies.
4. Social media sites are in the public domain and it is important to ensure that you are confident about the nature of the information you publish. Permission must be sought if you wish to publish or report on meetings or discussions that are meant to be private or internal to Horley Town Council. Don't cite or reference customers, partners or suppliers without approval.
5. Don't use insulting, offensive or racist language or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace. Show consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory – such as politics or religion.

## Use by Members

Members should ensure that they are familiar with the guidance that is set out within this policy and that their use of social media does not put the Council's information and security systems at risk, or be damaging to the reputation of the authority. Members should also be familiar with the [Localism Act Code of Conduct 2012](#) (General Obligations Part 1) which outlines the responsibilities of councillors disclosing information.

## Legal Requirements

The following legal documents have a bearing, or impinge on the rationale of this policy:

- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Computer Misuse Act 1990

## Evaluation and Review Date

This policy will be regularly reviewed by the Council.

***Draft dated: February 2016***  
***Next review date: April 2017***