



Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy

Date 16 April 2024

Minute C/24/3749



Introduction

INDEX

P3 – Introduction

P4 – Responsibilities whilst using Social Media (Facebook, Twitter Instagram, Private Messenger)

P5 - Policies using electronic communication.

P6 - Ashbourne Town Council Website

P6 - Video Conferencing (Teams, Zoom, etc.)

P6 - SMS – Texting

P6 – In conclusion

To be effective, social media needs to be integrated into the communications systems of the Council. This will enable us, as a Council to improve communication with the people of our town and promote our community and the events that take place, along with the Heritage Centre within the Town Hall.

We currently run a Facebook page www.facebook.com/AshbourneTownCouncil, a website <https://www.ashbournetowncouncil.gov.uk/> and a Twitter account <https://twitter.com/AshbourneTown> and use email to communicate. Any social media platforms that the council may join in the future will also be governed by this policy.

Our use of social media intends to (but is not exhaustive):

- Provide information and updates regarding activities and events that take place within Ashbourne Town in a positive manner.
- Provide information on any Surgeries that may be held at the Town Hall.
- Provide information on Councillor Vacancies.
- Provide information on “What’s on” at The Town Hall and The Historical Centre.
- Provide information on Projects within the town.
- Provide information on funding that may be available.

The aim of the policy, which applies to all employees and elected Members seeks to ensure:

- The successful promotion of Council-based services and events and engagement with the community.
- A consistent approach is adopted and maintained.
- Any users operate within existing policies and guidelines.
- The Council’s reputation is not damaged or adversely effected.
- That all employees and elected Members understand what acceptable use of social media and digital and electronic communication is both in a personal and business capacity.

Responsibilities whilst using Social Media (Facebook, Twitter Instagram, Private Messenger)

To ensure that all communication and discussions on social media are respectful and consistent we ask all employees and Elected Members:

- To be civil, tasteful, and relevant
- To ensure that any content or comment posted is not knowingly racist, profound, obscene, harmful, be sexually or racially offensive or libellous.
- To ensure that no items infringe copyright law.
- To ensure that personal information is not published.
- Not to promote commercial ventures advertise or not sell products.
- To adhere to the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

Ashbourne Town Council retains the right to remove comments that they feel, infringe the above.

Ashbourne Town Council's social media will be monitored during the working hours that have been published on all relevant sites, we will not get involved in "chats" but we will endeavour to answer all queries in relation to Town Council business but due to traffic if your question is important please email admin@ashbournetowncouncil.gov.uk.

Ashbourne Town Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment on social media and reserve the right to take down posts and comments that offend, repeat offenders may be blocked.

Ashbourne Town Council, in the lead up to an election, either locally or nationally will not post anything that will be considered as supporting a political party, anything, that we consider to be party political that is posted on our profiles on social media will be removed.

Regarding any comment/s that breach the policy, The Council's response for staff and elected members will be to either ignore or to send a brief message to inform the sender of our policy, this will be at the Council's discretion and may be referred to managers or elected members for further advice. The Town Council will not engage in comments/spats on Town Council social media and abusive comments will be removed.

Policies using electronic communication.

Email.

All employees and elected Members have an official council email address that must be used for any official communication regarding the Town Council. The Town Clerk is responsible for any emails received and passing on any relevant information to action.

When drafting an email employees and elected members must:

- Ensure that they are courteous and polite, the use of any offensive language will not be tolerated.
- If the Town Clerk is copied into an email, it becomes official and is then subject to The Freedom of Information Act.
- All employees and elected Members users must not send, access, display, download, copy or circulate information containing stories, jokes or anecdotes that contain pornography or sexually orientated images including (but not exhaustive) politics, racial, religious, or sexual hatred, copyrighted music, illegal acts, and any information that may be considered offensive and will lead to further action.
- When sending an email consider the usage of CC'ing, is this relevant to who you are contacting? When replying to an email consider the usage or "reply all" this may cause congestion in the recipient's inbox. Please note that if you are forwarding an email consider if the recipient needs to see "the email trail."
- Emails are not secure and can be copied, consider when sending sensitive material if email is the most appropriate method.

- Note that emails that bully or harass will not be tolerated and will lead to further action.

Ashbourne Town Council Website

Our website <https://www.ashbournetowncouncil.gov.uk/> is predominantly used to communicate Ashbourne Town Council news, agendas, and minutes of Council meetings and to promote the Historical Centre and the hire of rooms with The Town Hall. All information must be relevant and up to date and reviewed regularly to ensure that is not out of date all items/articles must be removed in a timely manner.

Video Conferencing (Teams, Zoom, etc.)

If this medium is used, please ensure that all employees and elected Members are aware that meetings can and may be recorded and that they should conduct themselves in a professional and civil manner, the Council will not tolerate any abuse, bad language or defamatory comments and further action may be taken. Information is subject to The Data Protection Act and should be treated with sensitivity and confidentiality.

SMS – Texting

Staff and elected members may use text as a method of communication, but it must be noted that our policy for using electronic communication still applies.

In conclusion

Social media and electronic communication can and, should be viewed as a positive way of communication – it is cost effective, sustainable and a valuable resource to share information within our community and help develop relationships. We believe, as a council if used correctly and within the guidelines, social media and electronic communication should be viewed as the way to get important messages out to the community in a timely manner.