

Social Media Policy



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Social Media Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Policy outlines the responsibilities and standards expected by all staff employed by Manchester City Council when using social media inside and outside work.
- 1.2 The Policy should be read alongside the Council's Email Policy, Internet/Intranet Policy, the Social Media Code of Practice and the Employee Code of Conduct.
- 1.3 Social media is a key Council communication channel. The Council is committed to ensuring the legal and effective use of social media that does not compromise Council information, computer systems and networks, and which is in line with the Council's values.

2. What is meant by social media?

- 2.1 The term 'social media' is defined as websites and applications for social networking, where people create, share and exchange content and ideas in virtual networks and communities. The content shared may include (but is not limited to) personal information, opinions, research, commentary, video, pictures, and business information.
- 2.2 For the purpose of this Policy, the term applies (but is not limited) to blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, LinkedIn, YouTube, Vimeo, Foursquare, discussion forums, special interest forums, user communities and any other personal web space where content is created, manipulated and shared.

- 2.3 Employees should be aware that there are many more examples of social media than can be listed here and this is a constantly changing area. Employees should follow this Policy and accompanying guidelines in relation to any social media they use.

3. Relevant legislation

- 3.1 The Human Rights Act 1998 gives a 'right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence'. The provision is directly enforceable against public sector employers. Case law suggests that employees have a reasonable expectation of privacy in the workplace.
- 3.2 The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 covers the extent to which organisations can monitor or record communications at the point at which they enter or are being sent within the employer's telecommunications system. It applies to public and private communication networks.
- 3.3 The Data Protection Act 1988 covers how information about employees and job applicants can be collected, handled and used.

4. Scope of the Policy

- 4.1 This Policy covers all Manchester City Council employees, contractors and agency workers.

5. Principles of use – Manchester City Council social media accounts

- 5.1 All use of Council social media accounts should be in accordance with the Council's objectives and values, its Code of Conduct for Employees, the Email Policy, Internet/Intranet Policy, and its Equal Opportunities and Dignity at Work policies and procedures.
- 5.2 Officers must not set up any Council social media accounts without the agreement of the Digital Services Team in Central Communications and approval from the appropriate Head of Service.
- 5.3 Officers with responsibility for Council social media accounts, known as account moderators, must inform the Digital Services Team of any changes to account passwords or account moderation. (See Appendix 1 for the definition of an account moderator.)
- 5.4 Account moderators must only engage with appropriate accounts linked to the Council's day-to-day business and not personal interest such as football clubs or celebrity accounts.
- 5.5 All Council accounts must have clear Council branding, approved by the Digital Services Team.
- 5.6 Account moderators who publish on Council social media accounts are indemnified for posts as long as they have received instructions or information and acted in good faith. The moderator needs to ensure the accuracy of the information, or to ensure that the person asking for the information to be published is authorised to do so.
- 5.7 Account moderators must act in accordance with the Council's Data Protection and Information Security policies.
- 5.8 Account moderators must act professionally at all times in Council social media accounts. All posts must be in line with the Council's values and the Employee Code of Conduct.
- 5.9 Content copied from elsewhere, for which the Council does not own the copyright, must not be published.
- 5.10 Account moderators must not publish the same or similar content repeatedly or in bulk; this can be called 'spamming'.
- 5.11 Council social media accounts must not be used at any time for political purposes or political party campaigning.
- 5.12 Account moderators must regularly review the Council accounts they are responsible for. Any inappropriate content must be removed immediately, and the account moderator must report the content to their line manager, Central Communications and the social media site or application.

- 5.13 Account moderators must not post promotional content for commercial organisations or endorse external organisations unless approval has been given by the appropriate Head of Service.
- 5.14 Account moderators should not use the same passwords for social media accounts that are used to access Council computers or devices.
- 5.15 Account moderators should not follow links or download software on social media pages posted by individuals or organisations they do not know.
- 5.16 If any content on any social media web page looks suspicious in any way, account moderators should close their browser and should not return to that page.
- 5.17 Account moderators must configure social media accounts to encrypt sessions whenever possible. Facebook, Twitter and others support encryption as an option. This is extremely important for roaming users who connect via public wi-fi networks.
- 5.18 If a device that is used to access Council social media accounts is lost or stolen, Digital Communications (webadmin@manchester.gov.uk) must be notified immediately so that passwords can be changed.

6. Principles of use – personal social media accounts

- 6.1 The Council respects the rights of all employees to a private life. However, staff must be aware that where they are identified as a Council employee, they are expected to behave appropriately and in line with the Council's policies and Employee Code of Conduct.
- 6.2 All employees are reminded of their responsibilities as set out in the Employee Code of Conduct, and they should conduct their personal social media activity with this in mind.
- 6.3 All Council employees are responsible for any content on their personal social media accounts, including tags and comments. The content should not breach the Council's policies and Employee Code of Conduct. If an employee breaches Council policies and the Employee Code of Conduct, the Council's agreed Disciplinary Procedure may be invoked, depending on the circumstances. We advise that staff who identify themselves as a Council employee include a statement on their personal social media account profiles to make it clear the opinions expressed are their own.
- 6.4 The Council needs to ensure that its reputation is not damaged and that confidentiality is protected. All stakeholders must be able to trust the integrity of our employees. Furthermore, the Council may be liable for the actions of staff who post inappropriately.

- 6.5 If staff choose to comment or post opinions in their personal accounts about Council activities, it should not bring the Council into disrepute.
- 6.6 Staff identifying themselves as employees of Manchester City Council, irrespective of whether or not they hold a politically restricted post, should take care that their opinions are not perceived as comments made on behalf of the Council, and that they do not bring the Council into disrepute.
- 6.7 Under no circumstances must staff share confidential information arising from their employment with the Council.
- 6.8 Work email addresses must not be used to set up personal social media accounts.
- 6.9 Staff should not accept customers/service users known to them in the course of their work as 'friends' in their personal social media accounts.
- 6.10 The Council understands that employees may wish to use their own computers or devices, such as smartphones and tablets, to access social media websites while they are at work. Employees must limit their use of social media on their own equipment to their official rest breaks such as their lunch break or before or after they are in work.

7. Roles and responsibilities

- 7.1 The following summarises the roles and responsibilities under this Policy of line managers, account moderators, employees (as defined in section 3), Digital Communications, ICT and HROD.
- 7.2 Line managers are responsible for ensuring that account moderators and any social media accounts within their control are monitored effectively and operate within the Policy and Code of Practice. All managers are responsible for ensuring that those in their teams understand this Policy and abide by it, and for giving guidance on the appropriate use of social media sites in the workplace. Line managers must also inform Digital Communications about any changes to the management of accounts, including change of account moderators and passwords.
- 7.3 Account moderators are responsible for the effective operation of Council social media accounts in line with the Policy and Code of Practice, following approval and support from Digital Communications. On receiving access to social media, all account moderators will be asked to sign a declaration and affirm their acceptance of the Social Media Policy and principles set out in the Social Media Code of Practice, and will be regularly reminded of the consequences of failing to uphold them. Failure to acknowledge acceptance of these principles will result in access to social media facilities being denied.

7.4 All employees are responsible for ensuring that their use of social media is in line with this Policy and Code of Practice.

7.5 Digital Communications are responsible for approving Council social media accounts, and will maintain a record of all accounts, their moderators and passwords. They will support the initial development of Council accounts and monitor accounts using a social media monitoring application; they will also be responsible for advising on the appropriate use of social media.

7.6 ICT are responsible for the Social Media Policy and will co-ordinate updates and changes as required. ICT will also ensure that the appropriate forms for approval, leavers and new starters are in place.

7.7 HROD are responsible for advising and supporting managers on any breaches of this Policy, and any resulting use of formal action such as the Disciplinary Policy.

8. Sanctions for misuse

8.1 Breaches of this Policy will be dealt with in line with the disciplinary procedure. Serious breaches could result in termination of the employment contract and where applicable, may result in civil action and/or criminal charges.

8.2 Further advice on these HR Policies can be sought from the HROD Helpdesk on 0161 277 1758 or email HROD@manchester.gov.uk. Further advice on the use of Council social media accounts can be sought from Digital Communications, email webadmin@manchester.gov.uk

9. Monitoring

9.1 The Council deploys technical controls to monitor and report on employee use of social media through the Council network. The Council also uses a social media monitoring application to monitor and report all mentions of the Council in social media web spaces.

10. Review

10.1 The Social Media Policy and Code of Practice will be reviewed after an initial period of six months following implementation, and thereafter will be reviewed periodically.

Appendix 1: Definition of an account moderator

Officers with responsibility for Council social media accounts are known as account moderators. They will produce content, and review and monitor the social media accounts they have responsibility for.

Account moderators will be selected by the service area and will receive training and support from Central Communications.