

Social Media Policy

RESPONSIBLE COMMITTEE: P&F

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

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Saltash Town Council

Social Media Policy

“If your 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 councils closer to the communities we serve” - Sandwell 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 Council.
2. Minor changes can be implemented by agreement of Clerk / Working Group Chair – 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 council's expansion into social media include:

- To meet the requirement for communication as part of Quality 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 (podcast) council meetings, increasing 'attendance' and awareness.

Section C: Types of Social Media

1. STC will initially use a Facebook page (a 'like' page, as opposed to a personal account with 'friends') and a Twitter account.
2. STC will potentially expand into use of a blog (allowing councillors to post personal projects and views) and Googleplus.

3. In the medium term STC will consider the use of podcasting and a YouTube Channel.

Section D: Responsibilities & appropriate use

1. Both the Facebook page and the Twitter account will be the responsibility of the Administration 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 Twitter Account, and will assist in promoting the pages (see Section H).
2. This is not expected to be an onerous task for any of the staff involved – it is anticipated that the staff operating the accounts will spend around 15 minutes a day on average on these tasks (where possible spread throughout the day to not 'cluster' posts).
3. The Town Clerk will monitor and offer guidance as required.
4. The Chair of the Working Group will also monitor, will give feedback to the Clerk and staff, and may be consulted for guidance if required. S/he will be an administrator for the Facebook page and will have the username and password for the Twitter Account: this is solely to provide continuity of access if staff are on leave/ill/leave etc.
5. Councillors will not be involved in 'official posting' but are encouraged to promote the pages (see Section H).
6. Official posts must conform to the content and style guidelines below.
7. All staff must not post in their personal capacity during office hours.
8. 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 Twitter.
2. Further to F1, The Clerk or Chair of the Working Group can approve additional pages to be liked or followed.
3. STC will reply as appropriate where posts are not abusive/using inappropriate language.
4. Users who do post abusively or using inappropriate language will be warned once and then blocked or banned.
5. These guidelines will be posted on the Facebook page and Twitter account where possible.

Section G: Content & style guidelines

1. If unsure on any point of content or style consult the Admin Officer in the first instance and then the Clerk or the Chair of the Working Group.
2. Official posts must express no personal opinions: only factual information or council policy.
3. In general, anything that would be allowed on the STC noticeboards will be allowed on the Facebook page and will be re-tweeted.
 - a. General content should include:
 - i. Regular items
 - ii. Next meeting: main topics.
 - iii. Major town events.
 - iv. Photos from events/engagement if available.
 - b. As and when items
 - i. Consultations.
 - ii. Elections – reminder when and where to vote.
 - iii. Important public information (school closures, road closures etc.).
 - c. Periodic reminders
 - i. Allotments.
 - ii. Guildhall hire.
 - iii. Festival fund.
 - iv. Community chest.
 - v. Notice-boards.
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 'council speak' – for example 'snow' not 'inclement weather' and 'budget setting' rather than 'pre-cepting'.
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. On Twitter use hashtags (#) and at signs (@) as appropriate. '#' flags up a post as being about a particular topic so people can easily find it so #severeweathersaltash please ring Saltash TC on 844846 if a grit bin near you in Saltash needs refilling'. '@' identifies a particular twitter user so '@sheryllmurray attending Town Council this evening: come along to give her your view on transport issues in Saltash' etc.
9. 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 tweet contact details (as replying individually requires 'following').

10. When replying to queries or comments speak as you would to a customer in person or on the phone.
11. 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

- a. Town Messenger
- b. STC Website
- c. STC Noticeboards
- d. Suggestions on Facebook
- e. Word of mouth
- f. Other appropriate ways as agreed