Social Media Policy

1. General

1.1 This policy on social networking websites is in addition to the Council's existing ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

1.2 The Council of the Isles of Scilly has, at present, a number of Social Media outlets, which we invite the public to follow us on. The Council also recognises that many employees use the internet for personal purposes and that many employees may also participate in social media.

1.3 Social media is the term commonly given to websites, online tools and other Information Communication Technologies (ICT) which allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Social media involves the building of communities or networks, encouraging participation and engagement. Examples include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc.

1.4 As employees are aware, the internet is provided primarily for business use. The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities of employees using the internet to access social networking websites for their personal and professional use.

2. Personal use of the internet

2.1 The Council permits employees to access social networking websites on the internet for personal use during specific times (provided that they are not undertaking overtime). These times are:

- Before and after work hours
- During the individual`s lunch break.

The Council reserves the right to restrict access to these websites.

3. Personal Use of Social Media

3.1 The Council respects an employee's right to privacy. As a council employee however, it is important to be aware that posting information or views about the Council cannot be isolated from your working life. Any information published online can, if unprotected, be accessed around the world within seconds.

3.2 The Council must also ensure that confidentiality and its reputation are protected. It therefore requires employees using social networking websites to:

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- Remember you are personally responsible for any content you publish.

- Understand your online privacy settings – check your settings and understand who can see the information you publish and your personal information

- If you do talk about the work you do or about a Council of the Isles of Scilly service you are associated with, you should make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of your employer. You are required to to use a disclaimer such as: “The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Council of the Isles of Scilly”

- You must not allow your use of social media to impact on your ability to fulfil your role and responsibilities and must always access it in your own time.

4. Using Social Media as a Council of the Isles of Scilly Employee

4.1 The Council has, at present, a number of Social Media outlets, which we invite the public to follow us on.

4.2 Most online communities have their own rules and guidelines, which we will always follow. We reserve the right to remove any contributions that break the rules or guidelines of the relevant community, or any of the following:

- Be civil, tasteful and relevant.
- Do not post messages that are unlawful, libelous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive.
- Do not swear.
- Do not post content copied from elsewhere, for which you do not own the copyright.
- Do not post the same message, or very similar messages, more than once (also called "spamming").
- Do not publicise your, or anyone else's, personal information, such as contact details.
- Do not advertise products or services.
- Do not impersonate someone else.

4.3 No Council information is to be circulated or reported on via personal Social Media pages. This applies to Council meetings as well as all other information. All official Council information should be posted only on official Council or departmental Social Media pages by authorised staff after clearance by the Public Relations Team or the Community Relations Officer as appropriate.

4.4 Please take care when posting information that could be considered libelous or inappropriate. This could include statements that bring a person or organisation into disrepute or have potential to damage their reputation. We reserve the right to remove any comments that we feel are libelous or inappropriate.

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5. Monitoring of internet access at work

5.1 The Council reserves the right to monitor employees' internet usage. The Council considers that valid reasons for checking an employee's internet usage include suspicions that the employee has:

- been spending an excessive amount of time viewing websites that are not work-related; or
- acted in a way that damages the reputation of the Council and/or breaches commercial confidentiality.

5.2 It will be the responsibility of line managers to ensure that their staff are using social media sites appropriately.

6. Disciplinary action

6.1 If the Council monitors employees' internet use to ensure that it is in accordance with this policy, access to the web may be withdrawn in any case of misuse of this facility.

6.2 If appropriate, disciplinary action may also be taken in line with the Council's disciplinary policy.

7. Security and identity theft

7.1 Employees should be aware that social networking websites are a public forum, particularly if the employee is part of a "network". Employees should not assume that their entries on any website will remain private. Employees should never send abusive or defamatory messages.

7.2 Employees should also be security conscious and should take steps to protect themselves from identity theft, for example by restricting the amount of personal information that they give out. Social networking websites allow people to post detailed personal information such as date of birth, place of birth and favourite football team, which can form the basis of security questions and passwords. In addition, employees should:

- ensure that no information is made available that could provide a person with unauthorised access to the Council and/or any confidential information; and
- refrain from recording any confidential information regarding the Council on any social networking website.

8. Recruitment

8.1 At no stage during the recruitment process will HR and line managers conduct searches on prospective employees on social networking websites. This is in line with the Council's equal opportunity policy.