Cyngor Cymuned
Trefriw
Community Council

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

This policy was adopted at a meeting on
10th November 2020
and will be reviewed in June 2023
or sooner should legislation dictate

A revolution is taking place in how we communicate. The world is experiencing the biggest ever change in how information is created and owned, as well as the speed in which it can be shared. This is changing the way we live, work and even how we speak and think.

Social media is a blanket term applied to a range of online multimedia tools that are used for creating content and two-way communication

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables Trefriw Community Council ("the Council") to interact in a way that improves the communications both within the Council and between the Council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

The Council has a website http://trefriwcommunitycouncil.co.uk, has administration access to the Trefriw Community Council Facebook page, and uses email to communicate.

The Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time the Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur, this Policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

The Facebook page is available to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within the Parish and promote our community positively.

Policy Statement

This policy is intended to help employees and elected members make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as social networking websites, forums, message boards, blogs or comments on web-articles, such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

This policy outlines the standards the Council requires employees and elected members to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which your use of social media will be monitored and the action that will be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.

Responsibility for implementation of the policy

- The Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
- The Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to our work.
- All employees and elected members should ensure that they take the time to read and understand this policy. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the Clerk or Chair of the Council.
- Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Clerk.

Communications from the Council will meet the following criteria:

- be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright;
- not contain any personal information;
- if it is official Council business, it will be moderated by either the Clerk to the Council or nominated Councillor(s);
- not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Council pages are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives, we ask you to follow these guidelines:

- be considerate and respectful of others - vulgarity, threats or abuse of language will not be tolerated;
- differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including the Council members or staff, will not be permitted;
- share freely and be generous with official Council posts, but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due;
- stay on topic;
- refrain from using the Council's Facebook page for commercial purposes or to advertise market or sell products.

The site is not monitored 24 hours a day and we will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, we will endeavour to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people or authorities. Please do not include personal/private information in your social media posts to us.

Sending a message or posting via Facebook will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and we will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through these channels. Instead, please make direct contact with the Council's Clerk clerk@trefriwcommunitycouncil.co.uk and/or members of the council by sending an email or letter.

We retain the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- obscene or racist content;
- personal attacks, insults, or threatening language;
- potentially libellous or defamatory statements;
- plagiarised material; any material in violation of any laws, including copyright;
- private, personal information published without consent;
- information or links unrelated to the content of the forum;
- commercial promotions or spam;
- allegations of a breach of a Council's policy or the law.

The Council's response to any communication received not meeting the above criteria will be to either ignore, inform the sender of our policy or send a brief response as appropriate. This will be at the Council's discretion based on the message received, given our limited resources available. Any information posted on social media not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. Repeat offenders will be blocked. The Council may post a statement that 'A post breaching the Council's Social Media Policy has been removed'. If the post alleges a breach of a Council's policy or the law, the person who posted it will be asked to submit a formal complaint to the Council or report the matter to the Police as soon as possible to allow due process.

Using Social Media

The Clerk and elected members are permitted to post material on a social media website in the name of the Council and on its behalf in accordance with the rules and scope of this policy. If you are not sure if your comments are appropriate do not post them until you have checked with the Clerk/Chair.

Monitoring use of social media websites

Employees and elected members should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for Council purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken against employees under our Disciplinary Procedure and councillors under the Code of Conduct.

Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and the Council. Whenever you are permitted to use social media in accordance with this policy, you must adhere to the following general rules:

- Do not upload, post or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.
- Any employee/elected member who feel that they have been harassed or bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform the Clerk/Chair. Never disclose commercially sensitive, personal private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with the Clerk/Chair.
- Do not up load, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.
- Before you include a link to a third party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit you to link to it.
- When making use of any social media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.
- Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the Council.
- You are personally responsible for content you publish into social media tools.
- Don't escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.
- Don't discuss colleagues without their prior approval.
- Always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion. Remember that although it is acceptable to make political points or canvass votes via your own social media accounts this will not be permissible if you are commenting on behalf of the Council.
- Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact details.

Where evidence of misuse is found the Council may undertake a more detailed investigation involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or managers involved in the investigation. If necessary, such information may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.

<u>If you notice any use of social media by other employees/elected members in breach of this policy please report it to the Clerk/Chair</u>

Community Council Website

Where necessary, we may direct those contacting us to our website to see the required information, or we may forward their question to one of our Councillors for consideration and response. We may not respond to every comment we receive particularly if we are experiencing a heavy workload.

The Council may, at its discretion, allow and enable approved local groups to have and maintain a presence on its website for the purpose of presenting information about the group's activities. The local group would be responsible for maintaining the content and ensuring that it meets the Council's 'rules and expectation' for the website. The Council reserves the right to remove any or all of a local group's information from the website if it feels that the content does not meet the Council's 'rules and expectation' for its website. Where content on the website is maintained by a local group it should be clearly marked that such content is not the direct responsibility of the Council.

Community Council email

The Clerk to the Community Council has their own council email address – clerk@trefriwcommunitycouncil.co.uk . Due to the part time nature of the Clerk's role the email account is only partially monitored during the normal working week – taking account of this we will

endeavour to reply to any questions sent, however, there may be occasions when we are not always able to reply individually to messages or comments received

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and passing on any relevant mail to members or external agencies for information and/or action. All communications on behalf of the Council will usually come from the Clerk, and/or otherwise will always be copied to the Clerk.

Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with residents in relation to their own personal views, if appropriate, with a copy to the Clerk. Any emails sent to the Clerk or Councillors in their official capacity will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act 2018. These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

Internal communication and access to information within the Council.
The Council is continually looking at ways to improve its working and the use of social media and electronic communication is a major factor in delivering improvement.

Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct, the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulation in all their work on behalf of the Council.

As more and more information becomes available at the press of a button, it is vital that all information is treated sensitively and securely. Councillors are expected to maintain an awareness of the confidentiality of information that they have access to and not to share confidential information with anyone. Failure to properly observe confidentiality may be seen as a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct and will be dealt with through its prescribed procedures (at the extreme it may also involve a criminal investigation). Members should also be careful only to copy in essential recipients on emails i.e. to avoid use of the 'Reply to All' option if at all possible, but of course copying in all who need to know and ensuring that email trails have been removed.

Monitoring and review of this policy

The Council shall be responsible for reviewing this policy annually to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

Further information for elected members, published by the Welsh Local Government Association, on the use of social media can be viewed on the One Voice Wales website:-
http://www.onevoicewales.org.uk/OVWWeb/good_practicegeneral-8204.aspx