



ALCESTER TOWN COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. Engaging with the Council on social media

- 1.1 The Council encourages members of the public, local organisations and community groups, members of the press, local councillors and others in our wider community to follow and engage with the Council through social media accounts.
- 1.2 The Council also encourages everyone in our community to share content from our corporate social media accounts with their own social media networks. This is especially important, for example, during emergency situations or where sharing timely information is essential.
- 1.3 Councillors may choose to engage with the community on their own 'councillor' social media accounts.
- 1.4 Individuals and organisations are responsible for the content that they choose to post to their social media accounts. This includes content created by others that individuals or organisations choose to repost, retweet or share.
- 1.5 The Council does not routinely respond to direct messages sent by social media. An automated response is sent to any messages received via social media directing the correspondent to the email address and phone number for the office.

2. Conduct on social media

- 2.1 The Council will treat everyone with courtesy and respect on its social media channels and therefore asks for the same in return from those who choose to engage with us.
- 2.2 The Council asks that council staff and councillors are treated courteously. Council staff and councillors should never be subjected to bullying or other forms of abuse or harassment.

2.3 Council staff and councillors have the right to carry out their civic duties and work without fear of being attacked or abused. Any behaviour whether that be verbal, physical or in writing, which causes either councillors or council staff to feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or threatened, is unacceptable.

3. Guidance for Councillors when using social media

3.1 When using social media and in accordance with the Code of Conduct, Councillors must reflect the following values:

- **Respect** – do not make personal attacks, rude, disrespectful, or offensive comments. Be careful not to direct points at individuals, as comments directed towards an individual can be seen as disrespectful compared to comments more generally about organisations or policies.
- **Equality** – do not publish anything that is hateful, abusive, or demeaning to any group of people on account of disability, ethnicity, nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation, or any other personal characteristic.
- **Non-intimidatory** – do not say or condone anything that might be construed as bullying, intimidation, or harassment of any person.
- **Transparency & Openness** – be open and transparent but equally remember confidential and commercially sensitive information that is not in the public domain must be protected.
- **Confidentiality** – do not disclose confidential or personal information, names or contact details without prior authorisation from the owner of the information or the person concerned.
- **Good Repute** – do not say anything that could bring yourself or the Council into disrepute or could be seen to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person by reason of their position at the Council.

3.2 Councillors should be clear of the capacity in which they use social media, when posting, sharing, and commenting. Councillors can have “blurred identities” both as a Councillor and an individual.

3.3 Councillors are entitled to have personal views that may differ from those of the Council collectively, but they should not give the impression they are representing the Council when expressing those views. Councillors should:

- Include an overarching statement on personal social media accounts along the lines of: *“all views are my own and not connected to my role as a town councillor”*.
- If Councillors maintain a separate account for Council duties, include a statement along the lines of: *“this social media account relates to my work as a town councillor, all views expressed are my individual views as a Councillor and are not reflective of agreed Council policy unless expressly stated”*.

4. Civility and Respect

- 4.1 Council staff and others operating the Council's social media accounts will at all times be mindful of the council's relevant policies, procedures and processes, including the Code of Conduct.
- 4.2 The Council will record and report abuse directed at the Council. The Council may, for example, create screenshots of comments and keep a record of abusive or threatening communications, and may take further action as appropriate.
- 4.3 Council staff and councillors should not have to put up with abusive or threatening behaviour. When subjected to such behaviour. The council reserves the right to enact its relevant social media policies and may, for example, delete content, block individuals or report individuals to social media platforms when appropriate to do so.
- 4.4 The Council may need to report issues of poor conduct directly to social media platforms. For instance, if someone has created a 'fake account' or if someone is persistently abusive to the Council.
- 4.5 The Council reserves the right to report criminal matters it notices on social media to the Police. For instance, hate crime/speech or threats of violence.

5. Complaints

- 5.1 In the first instance, members of the public are asked to contact the Town Clerk on clerk@alcester-tc.gov.uk or telephone 01789 766084 if they have concerns about the use of the Council's social media.
- 5.2 Formal complaints should be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Complaints Procedure which is available on the Council's website.

Policy adopted by Full Council –

Review due April 2028