

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE – 17TH OCTOBER 2017

Report of the Head of Strategic Support

Part A

ITEM 8 PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES POLICY

Purpose of the Report

To gain Personnel Committee's approval to implement the Personal Use of Social Media Sites Policy.

Recommendation

That the Personal Use of Social Media Sites Policy be agreed and implemented.

Reason

It is necessary to implement a policy that covers employees' use of Social Media sites in general, and to make employees aware of the correct conduct when using these sites.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

The Council currently has two policies that relate to the use of Social Media; however these policies relate, in the main, to using Social Media sites at work and the rules that apply to employees. However staff should also be aware of the risk that could potentially be faced when sharing information about their professional and personal life on Social Media sites in their own time.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions

It is recommended that the Personal Use of Social Media Sites Policy be published on the intranet following approval by Personnel Committee.

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report

Financial Implications

There are no immediate financial implications arising from this decision.

Risk Management

There are no specific risks associated with this decision.

Background Papers: Equality Impact Assessment

Officer to contact: Adrian Ward
Head of Strategic Support
(01509) 634573
adrian.ward@charnwood.gov.uk

Part B

Background

1. The Council currently has two policies that relate to the use of Social Media:
 -) Social Media Guidelines
 -) Internet and E-Mail Acceptable Usage Policy
2. These policies relate in the main to using social media sites at work and the rules that apply to employees.
3. It is necessary to implement a policy that covers employees' use of Social Media sites in general, and to make employees' aware of the correct conduct when using these sites. Furthermore employees should be aware of the risk that could potentially be faced when sharing information about their professional and personal life.
4. In particular the policy defines what Social Media is to ensure employees are clear in relation to what this term covers.
5. It emphasises that employees are personally responsible for the content they publish on social media sites and should be aware that what is shared may end up in the public domain even if it appears to be private.
6. The policy highlights that employees should be aware of identifying themselves as Charnwood Borough Council employees on social media sites.
7. The new policy emphasises that inappropriate use of social media sites inside and outside of work, in a manner which contravenes the policy, may lead to disciplinary action. This can include, for example, instances of posting offensive language or images, cyber bullying and making disparaging remarks about service users.

Appendices

Appendix A: - Personal Use of Social Media Sites Policy.



Personal Use of Social Media Sites Policy

Contents

Purpose	1
Scope	1
What is Social Media?	2
Employees' Responsibilities	2
Line Manager's Responsibility	3
Consequences of Mis-Using Personal Media Sites	3
Security	4

Purpose

The purpose of the Personal Use of Social Media Sites Policy is to provide clarification regarding how employees should conduct themselves when using social media sites at any time.

This policy is not intended to restrict employees from using social media sites, but to make them aware of the risks they could potentially face when sharing information about their professional and personal life.

The implementation of this policy will ensure situations are avoided where the integrity of employees could be undermined, the Council is brought into disrepute and professional relationships with colleagues and services users are compromised.

Additionally, adhering to the policy reduces the risk of employees contravening sections of the Data Protection Act or falling foul of libel, defamation and copyright laws.

The Council's [Code of Conduct](#) sets out the minimum standards of behaviour expected from its employees. Managers and employees should ensure that they read this policy in conjunction with the Code of Conduct.

[Back to Contents](#)

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Charnwood Borough Council, including those on temporary/fixed term and casual staff, employed under the following conditions of service:

-) Joint Negotiating Committee for Local Government Services (JNC);
-) National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC);
-) Joint Negotiating Committee for Local Authority Craft and Associated Employees (Craft).

This policy applies to the personal use of social media sites. Work/official social media sites are covered by the [Social Media Guidelines](#) published by the Communications Section. Therefore, employees who wish to set up a work based media channel should refer to this guidance. The Council also has a separate Internet and E-mail Acceptable Usage Policy that applies to all employees.

[Back to Contents](#)

What is Social Media?

Social Media is the term commonly given to websites and online tools that allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. As the name implies, social media involves the building of communities or networks, encouraging participation and engagement.

This list is not exhaustive but gives some examples of social media:

- Social networking sites for example Facebook, Myspace and Bebo
- Blogging and micro blogging sites e.g. Twitter
- Video clips and podcasts e.g. You Tube
- Flickr and other photo sharing sites
- Discussion forums

[Back to Contents](#)

Employees' Responsibilities

Employees are personally responsible for the content they publish on social media sites and should be aware that what is shared may end up in the public domain even if it appears to be private.

-) Employees should be aware that if they identify themselves as CBC employees on Social Media Sites and post any disparaging remark or social media post deemed to be inappropriate, they may be subject to disciplinary action. The Council will consider the impact of remarks which could lead to genuine concerns about an employee's ability to carry out their role, has a negative impact on colleagues / particular groups of individuals or potentially brings the Council into disrepute.
-) Remarks or posts of this nature may be subject to disciplinary action even when an employee has not identified themselves as a CBC employee.
-) Employees must not present their personal views as being representative of the Council.
-) Employees should not make any disparaging remarks regarding the Council, its employees, service users, ex-service users, service users' relatives, Council suppliers and partner organisations.

On no account should an employee develop a social media relationship with service users or their family members/carers when it has arisen as a direct result of their working relationship. Employees must not request or accept service users or associated people as friends/contacts. In a situation whereby an individual who is a friend or relative of an employee beforehand, becomes a service user with whom you have contact/potentially have contact with, employees should seek guidance from their line manager.

Employees must not endorse or criticise service providers used by the Council or develop on line relationships which create a conflict of interest especially when employees have procurement or commissioning responsibilities.

Employees must not represent their own view/opinion as being that of the Council and must not post information, including photos and videos, on sites which could bring the Council into disrepute.

Employees must be mindful of being associated with any group which identifies the Council and hence any behaviour which could be deemed to be inappropriate.

Employees should be aware that offensive language and images relating to a particular group must not be used, for example, language which is racist or homophobic or derogatory about individuals with a disability. Furthermore, activity of this nature could be a criminal offence, for example, under the Malicious Communications Act.

Employees must not divulge any confidential Council or Partner Organisation information.

If any employees have any concerns with the implementation of this policy then they should speak to their line manager in the first instance.

[Back to Contents](#)

Line Manager's Responsibility

If line managers are unsure of the interpretation of this policy then they should speak to HR Services where appropriate advice and guidance will be given.

[Back to Contents](#)

Consequences of Mis-Using Personal Media Sites

Employees should be aware that the use of social media sites in a manner which contravenes this policy may lead to [disciplinary action](#) being taken against them which could result in that employee's dismissal from the Council.

Any instances of "cyber bullying" will be addressed under the [Disciplinary Policy](#) and this may result in the employee's dismissal from the Council.

Instances that are considered to fall under the definition of a criminal activity will be reported to the police.

As with all personal internet use, employees should be aware that accessing social media sites during working time may also result in disciplinary action being taken and could result in the employee's dismissal from the Council.

In accordance with the disciplinary policy, the advice of IT services should be sought, if required, to assist line managers when conducting an investigation and, if necessary, to provide records relating to employee's internet usage during working time. Please refer to the [Electronically](#) Collected Data Checklist for further details and to gain authorisation to access any IT records.

Security

Information placed on social media sites may be visible to a large audience, and can identify where people work or live. It is advisable therefore to ensure that you do not share more information than you need to, and that you have the correct privacy settings on your accounts.

[Back to Contents](#)