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Part 1

1. Personal and professional responsibilities

- 1.1. This details personal and professional responsibilities for the participation in or use of social media as part of your job or whenever you identify yourself in a professional capacity as a DCC employee

2. Personal use of social media

- 2.1. Whether or not an individual chooses to create or participate in an online social network or any other form of online publishing or discussion is his or her own business. The views and opinions you express are your own.
- 2.2. As a council employee it is important to be aware that posting information or views about the council can't be isolated from your working life. Any information published online can, if unprotected, be accessed around the world within seconds and will be available for all to see and will contribute to your Online Digital Footprint¹.
- 2.3. Remember you are **personally responsible** for any content you publish.
- 2.4. Understand your online **privacy** settings – Check your settings and understand who can see the information you publish and your personal information.
- 2.5. All DCC employees should be aware of and follow DCCs general **Employee Code of Conduct**.
- 2.6. All DCC employees should be aware of and follow the **Information Security Policy**
- 2.7. If you do talk about the work you do or a DCC service you are associated with, you should make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of DCC. **Use a disclaimer** such as: "The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of the County Council."
- 2.8. Do not let your use of social media interfere with your job and always access in your own time. See guidelines on **Using County Council Websites and the Internet** and **Private use of ICT**

¹ A **Digital Footprint** is the data trace or trail left by someone's activity in a digital environment. Digital Footprints are the capture in an electronic fashion of memories and moments and are built from the interaction with the Internet, World Wide Web, Mobile Web and other Digital devices.

3. Using social media as a DCC employee

- 3.1. Your relationship with social media changes as soon as you identify yourself as a County Council employee, speak in any kind of professional capacity or seek to deploy social media on council business.
- 3.2. In such circumstances there are certain responsibilities, standards of behaviour and other organisational considerations which apply. Remember, you are the public face of the council and should participate in the same way as you would with other media or public meetings or forums.
- 3.3. Always remember that participation online results in your comments being permanently available and open to being republished in other media.
- 3.4. You should also be aware that you may attract media interest in yourself or the organisation, so proceed with care whether you are participating in a business or a personal capacity. If you have any doubts, take advice from your line manager and/or the Corporate Communications Unit.

4. Participation as an employee or professional capacity

- 4.1. As an employee, you must take the following into consideration when using social media:
- 4.2. You are **personally responsible** for any content you publish so be mindful that it is in the public domain and on the record for a long time.
- 4.3. If you wish to participate as a Council employee **you should clearly identify yourself and your role**. Make it clear whether you are acting in your professional capacity – and remember, even if you do not intend to, your professional role or status as a DCC employee will affect the way you and the organisation are perceived and therefore brings certain responsibilities.
- 4.4. **Be aware of your association with DCC** in online spaces. If you identify yourself as a DCC employee, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself with colleagues and customers.
- 4.5. **Be professional**. Make sure you are always seen to act in an honest, accurate, fair and responsible way at all times.
- 4.6. Be aware of your **language and conduct**. The rules governing staff conduct such as the **Acceptable Behaviour** and **Equality and Diversity** policies still apply. Also, as in all publishing, you should be aware of issues such as libel, defamation and slander.
- 4.7. **Never share confidential or sensitive information**. You should know and follow the Information Security Policy. You have a unique inside track so be aware of the rules on data protection and financial regulations.
- 4.8. **Try to add value**. Provide worthwhile information and perspective. DCC's brand is best represented by its people and what you publish will reflect on the wider organisation.

4.9. **Tell your line manager.** If you wish to participate in a professional capacity it may be best to discuss with your line manager first. Always alert your manager or the Corporate Communications Unit early if you think you may have made a mistake.

5. **Acting on behalf of the organisation or as part of your job**

5.1. It is important to remember that there is a human cost in using social media as an employee or in a professional capacity. Social Media is about the social connections and conversations we have with our customers, peers and friends. To gain the maximum value from these tools, you should look to foster relationships and therefore you will need to acknowledge and understand the commitment and investment of time in building and developing sustainable online relationships with people.

5.2. Understand the **resources** available to you to maintain and foster sustainable relationships.

5.3. **Get official backing.** Ensure you have the full approval and support of your line manager before any official deployment of social media. Ideally, also alert the Corporate Communications Unit of your intentions.

5.4. **Be professional.** Always remember that you are an ambassador for the organisation. Always disclose your position as a representative of the County Council, your department or team. Anything you publish will reflect directly on the council as a whole.

5.5. **Purpose and outcomes.** Make sure you think through why you are deploying social media and what outcome you wish to achieve. For example, if you are inviting public responses then think through how you will make use of the results and how this fits in with other forms of consultation. Ask yourself is social media appropriate for this activity?

5.6. **Assess any risks.** Think through any potential risks and make sure you have plans in place to manage and mitigate these.

5.7. **Respect your target audience.** Think about their specific needs and be aware of any language, cultural or other sensitivities you may need to take account of.

5.8. **Ask and seek permission** to publish any information, report or conversation that is not already in the public domain. Do not cite or reference customers, partners or suppliers without their approval.

5.9. **Respect copyright** when linking to images or other online material.

5.10. **Always stay within the legal framework** and be aware that data protection, financial regulations apply.

5.11. **Monitoring and evaluation.** Make sure you have a plan for how you intend to monitor and evaluate the success of your activity.

6. **Freedom of Information**

Listed below are list of circumstances where information might be considered as non disclosable under Freedom Of Information.

6.1. **Commercial interests**

Information that constitutes either a trade secret or information that, if released, might prejudice the commercial interests of either the Council or another third party.

6.2. **Information provided in confidence**

Information that has been given to the Council by a third party and to which a duty of confidence is owed. Such confidentiality may be expressly stated, such as my way of contractual confidentiality or could be implied. The information in question must have a quality of confidence, in order to be considered confidential.

6.3. **Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs**

Any information that if released, would prejudice the ability of the Council to perform any of its functions. This exemption requires formal sign off by the County Solicitor.

6.4. **Legal Professional Privilege**

Information which constitutes legal advice provided by a solicitor to their client. This includes legal advice from internal DCC Solicitors. Information which is also derived for the principle purpose of either seeking legal advice, or entering into litigation is also covered here.

6.5. **Personal Information**

Information pertaining to a living identifiable individual such as a staff member, client or even the requester.

6.6. **Investigations of a public authority**

Any information that would prejudice the ability of the Council to carry out an investigation. This might include investigations under a statutory instrument or could include HR investigations.

6.7. **Law enforcement**

Information that if disclosed, would prejudice the capabilities of any body to detect or prevent crime, apprehend or prosecute offenders.

Further information is available on the Source -

<http://staff.devon.gov.uk/exemption>

Part 2

1. **Guidance and tips on using social media in different scenarios**

1.1. To undertake your duties in this online space there are several different roles you may find yourself in. Sometimes these roles may be combined but more often you will be acting in a distinct capacity. Below are the types of role you may be asked to undertake and some common-sense guidance to help you fulfil this role.

2. **Contributor/Participant**

2.1. This is often the most familiar role in the online space – you are participating in online discussions, networks and forums simply as a participant. You neither own or lead these discussions and should have equal voice as other participants. You are contributing to add value to the discussion in a relevant way.

2.2. Please be aware that discussions, debate and at the more extreme end, argument all magnify strength of opinion so it is important to understand that what you say and the way you say it. It will directly reflect upon the mood of the discussion and the reaction of people within it. Be professional and show respect.

2.3. **Guidance and Tips:**

2.3.1. *Avoid getting into an argument or inflaming a discussion*

2.3.2. *Understand the impact of your participation / contribution*

2.3.3. *Are children or vulnerable people involved and will you be interacting with them?*

3. **Broadcaster/Publisher**

3.1. Your role is to simply provide or promote some form of information to an audience. To do this effectively you must be accurate, fair, thorough and clear in the information you provide.

3.2. The rules of Accessibility and Plain English should apply.

3.3. It is also a common oversight to forget to ensure that if you provide information or generate awareness through broadcast you must also provide a method or route for people to find out more or enquire about the information provided. If this is yourself make sure that you are set-up to manage this response. If it is someone else then ensure that they are aware that this is the case and they understand the information you have broadcast.

3.4. **Guidance and Tips:**

- 3.4.1. *You must have buy-in from the organisation*
- 3.4.2. *Making the commitment to maintaining the accuracy an updating of this information*
- 3.4.3. *Ensure that there is a clear and resourced 'return path' for people to enquire or respond to your information.*
- 3.4.4. *Understand the restrictions of your chosen tool. For example twitter restricts you to 140 characters, if you wish people to "retweet" your information allow space for this to occur.*

4. **Lead Spokesperson**

- 4.1. *A lead spokesperson may start, lead or participate in a discussion but in this role you must accept the full responsibility as THE voice of the Council on the matters you are called on to discuss. It is therefore important to understand the impact of your position and the accuracy and rationality of your comments in an online space. You will be held to account for them either by your employer, the media or the public. Be professional. Be Responsible. Be credible. Most importantly never say anything that you cannot substantiate and avoid commenting on things that you are not spokesperson for (i.e.: if you are the Lead Spokesperson for Highways then it would be best you did not speak about Council issues relating to Child Protection, that is unless you are the Lead Spokesperson for this aswell!)*

4.2. **Guidance and Tips:**

- 4.2.1. *Let the Press Office know*
- 4.2.2. *Are you the right person or is someone better placed to do this?*
- 4.2.3. *Have you attended the internal media training course?*

5. **Community Management (Moderator/Facilitator)**

- 5.1. *A Moderator/facilitator is one of the most important and difficult roles to undertake. You should not underestimate the time needed to encourage, grow and create valuable online discussion or communities.*
- 5.2. **Forum moderators are not police officers**
 - 5.2.1. *The biggest mistake forum or discussion owners make when taking on forum moderators is expecting them to police the community. Many see the main role of moderators as enforcers of the site rules, as people who delete posts they don't like and lock topics the moment they run off-course. If these are the priorities of your moderators, you are doing it all wrong.*

5.2.2. The primary role of a forum moderator should be to promote interaction. A forum moderator should be posting new threads and adding new content to the site. They should be helping out members with their queries and they should be keeping threads alive by asking questions. That is not to say that forum moderators shouldn't be allowed to delete or lock threads that are inappropriate – of course this should be one of their roles. But this should never be their *primary role*.

6. How to effectively moderate forums and online discussion

6.1. Why forum moderation is necessary

6.1.1. If you don't moderate your forum it can be overwhelmed with spam and abusive posts – this is the primary reason why you should ensure all the forums you run have some degree of moderation. Spam and abusive posts are detrimental to your online community – you must moderate your forums to prevent irreversible damage from taking place.

6.2. Why moderation should be taken seriously

6.2.1. Many forum moderators will often delete comments they disagree with, or members they suspect of spamming, then think nothing else of it. This is a mistake.

6.2.2. Forum moderation, if done incorrectly, can be worse than having no moderation at all. Over-zealous moderation can result in members ending up feeling alienated and angry when they find their posts or accounts deleted for no understandable reason.

6.2.3. A community relies on its members – before you take decisive action against yours, make sure you are making the right decision.

6.3. How to avoid conflict when moderating

6.3.1. It is essential that your online community has a set of rules, parameters or guidelines for your members to follow.

6.3.2. Before you have to take action against a member, you should always contact them and try to get them to remove or edit the post themselves by referring them to the rule you feel they have broken.

6.3.3. In this way, you are making your site user feel far more valued on a personal level – this is far preferable to the member simply returning one day to find their post(s) or account deleted.

7. The key to effective forum moderation

7.1. You should only edit the accounts or posts of your members as a last resort.

7.2. If you are unhappy with any content they have created, speak directly and confidentially to that person.

This way, you will not end up alienating your community – they will respect you far more as a moderator and will feel far more valued as a member of your community.

- 7.3. Each online community will be unique and will develop its own “rhythm”, you may feel that the community is inactive when in fact it could be in a quiet phase within its cycle. Good community managers learn the unique rhythms of their communities and contribute, encourage and foster participation at the right times.

- 7.4. **Guidance and Tips:**

- 7.4.1. *Special needs of the audience*

- 7.4.2. *Are children or vulnerable people involved*

8. **Forum Administrator**

- 8.1. A forum administrator may indeed fulfil some of the advanced roles of the Moderator however if we separate the facilitation and moderation of the content of the site from the administration of the forum in terms of it being up to date, technical issues, adding or deleting accounts, routing general enquiries and ensuring the structure and the technical/functional integrity of the site remains intact then this can be seen as an administrative role. A Moderator/Facilitator is NOT an administrative role as it is responsible for the content and its integrity on the site/forum and is therefore a highly evolved role.

9. **Useful contacts:**

- 9.1. Web & Digital Communications Team – 01392 382943
- 9.2. Corporate Marketing Team (including design and branding) – 01392 382954
- 9.3. Corporate Press Office – 01392 382173
- 9.4. Customer Relations and Information Governance – 01392 384674