Usk Town Council

Social Media Policy

This policy applies to all elected and co-opted Councillors, Council employees and other workers (including casual agency workers, secondees and contractors) who use the Council's infrastructure and are granted access to represent Usk Town Council through communications on social media channels.

1. Introduction

1.1 Usk Town Council's policy on social media outlines guidance for communication and engagement within and outside the organisation.

1.2 "Social media" is a term used for online communication tools, websites and interactive media that enables users to interact with each other in various ways, through sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. There are far too many social media sites to list but some of the most popular examples are; Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Social media involves building online communities or networks, which encourage participation, dialogue and involvement.

1.3 Social media is about how we can better share and interact with the community, provide feedback and communicate with others about the same place or issues. In an instant social media provides greater scope for people who live and work in Usk to be engaged with and share information and take part in the information which helps to shape the decision-making process of the Town Council.

1.4 It could also enable us to engage with harder-to-reach groups like the younger population. Rather than waiting for individuals or groups to approach the Council, social media offers the opportunity of being able to connect directly to the community, listen to what people are saying and engage with them on an equal footing, focusing on encouraging two-way communications rather than simply delivering messages.

1.5 For social media to work effectively it is vital that it is used as part of the overall communications mix: up to date information about the Council, its services, reports, meetings and engagement activities must be posted on the corporate website and social media communications should signpost people to the appropriate web pages wherever possible.

1.6 There are different forms and types of social media and we want to encourage the Town Council and the community to get the most out of the latest communication forums in a positive way, shaping services, working together, and improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of Usk.

1.7 We need to set clear guidelines for using social media sites to ensure they are used effectively as part of a wider communications mix and that their use does not expose the Council to security risks or reputational damage. Therefore, we need a comprehensive policy to effectively manage the corporate use of social media.

2. Using Social Media

2.1 Using social media to communicate more widely should not be at the expense or detriment to communicating with those who do not have direct access to a computer or mobile phone.

2.2 It is vital that Usk Town Council continues to provide local people with every opportunity to engage with their community. For example, use of social media to disseminate information about the council meetings and the agenda, the topics for debate and decision, giving people the opportunity to comment and have their views considered.

2.3 Using the Council website and social media channels to inform the local community of decisions which have been made.

2.4 We need to ensure that our communications are effective, for example, using online spaces to share project documents, advice and ideas, or using tools to plan and organise meetings.

2.5 In an ever-increasing environment of superfast communication and instant messaging/information it is important that UskTown Council makes available appropriate resources to maintain its social media information. It is recommended that The Town Clerk and at least three Councillors are active administrators of social media channels, are given full administration rights on these channels and receive training and support in the use of social media as a communication channel for the Council.

3. Code of conduct

3.1 Usk Town Council should be proactive and confident when using social media-and seek to achieve meaningful results through these activities.

3.2 Firstly, before activating a message you must consider the wider implications of the information you are about to impart and in what capacity the information is being sent and for what reason or purpose.

3.3 The Town Council's General Code of Conduct and Standing Orders must also be taken into account.

3.4 Respect copyright, fair-use and financial disclosures.

3.5 If ever in doubt you should always seek the advice of the Mayor or Town Clerk in advance.

3.6 In times of instant messaging there is also the serious side of the instant impact, both on time and resources, particularly when information is shared inappropriately or based on assumption and not all facts have been assimilated first.

3.7 Set the tone for online conversations by being polite, honest and respectful. Do not undermine others. Use words which recipients and readers will understand, remaining professional at all times.

3.8 Do not disclose non-public information or the personal information of others.

3.9 Be accurate with what you type, fair, thorough and transparent. Encourage constructive criticism and deliberation. Make sure what you say online is consistent with other communications.

3.10 Be honest and maintain integrity. Remember you are an ambassador for the Town Council. It is important that any accounts or profiles you create are completely separate to any personal

profiles/accounts and due consideration must be given to online activity and whether or not it could bring your office, position or the Town Council into disrepute.

3.11 Do not use insulting, offensive or racist language or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace. Show consideration for others privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory-such as politics or religion.

3.12 Be responsive; make an effort to share what you know and offer insights where appropriate and put people in touch with someone who can help if you can't. Respond to questions and comment in a timely manner and make sure you meet user expectations for the type of social media you are using.

3.13 If an officer receives threats, abuse or harassment from members of the public through their use of social media they must report such incidents using the Council's incident reporting procedures.

3.14 If you're moderating any kind of online space that is managed by Usk Town Council, we have some basic rules about what kind of content is acceptable. These are our five guiding principles for user content, which should be applied to discussion forums, online consultations and user comments.

3.15 These five principles are:

- Respect other users.

- Avoid offensive language.

- Do not break the law.

- Do not link to inappropriate sites.

- Do not add commercial content.

28th September 2016