Shire of Peppermint Grove

Administrative Policies - 2.7 Social Media Policy

Policy	Administrative Policies - 2.7 Social Media Policy
Purpose	To guide all councillors, employees, contractors, agents and volunteers of the Shire of Peppermint Grove in the appropriate use of social media.
Status	Administrative - Statutory

Policy

Context

The Shire of Peppermint Grove recognises that social media provides new opportunities for dynamic and interactive two-way communications which can complement existing communication and further improve information, access and delivery of key services.

The intent of this policy is to provide understanding and guidance for the appropriate use of social media platforms and tools by council staff, councillors and contractors, agents and volunteers of the Shire of Peppermint Grove who purport to use social media for the purpose of conducting Council business.

Statement

The policy outlines requirements for compliance with confidentiality, governance, legal, privacy and regulatory parameters when using social media to conduct council business. It aims to:

- Inform appropriate use of social media tools for the Shire of Peppermint Grove;
- Promote effective and productive community engagement through social media;
- Minimise miscommunication or mischievous communications; and
- Help the Shire of Peppermint Grove manage the inherent challenges of speed and immediacy.

The policy applies to those digital spaces where people may comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content, including – but not limited to:

- Blogs
- Bulletin boards
- Citizen journalism and news sites
- Forums and discussion boards

- Instant messaging facilities
- Microblogging sites
- Online encyclopedias
- Podcasts
- Social networking sites
- Video and photo sharing sites Video podcasts
- Wikis
- Any other websites that allow individuals to use simple publishing tools or new technologies emerging from the digital environment.

This policy is not intended to cover personal use of social media where:

- The author publishes information in their personal capacity and not on behalf of, or in association with the Shire of Peppermint Grove; and
- No reference is made to the Shire of Peppermint Grove, its councillors, staff, policies and services, suppliers or other stakeholders or council related issues.
- Individuals should use discretion and keep personal use of social media to a minimum during work hours. For guidance on acceptable levels of personal use of social media during work hours see your manager.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies and procedures of the Shire of Peppermint Grove.

Social Media Policy/Guidelines

When using social media, council staff and contractors are expected to:

- Seek prior authorisation from the CEO
- Adhere to the Shire of Peppermint Grove Code of Conduct, policies and procedures
- Behave with caution, courtesy, honesty and respect
- Comply with relevant laws and regulations
- Reinforce the integrity, reputation and values of the Shire of Peppermint Grove.

The following content is not permitted under any circumstances:

- Abusive, profane or sexual language
- Content not relating to the subject matter of that blog, board, forum or site

- Content which is false or misleading
- Confidential information about Council or third parties
- Copyright or trademark protected materials
- Discriminatory material in relation to a person or group based on age, colour, creed, disability, family status, gender, nationality, marital status, parental status, political opinion/affiliation, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, race or social origin, religious beliefs/activity, responsibilities, sex or sexual orientation
- Illegal material or materials designed to encourage law breaking
- Materials that could compromise council, employee or system safety
- Materials which would breach applicable laws (defamation, privacy, trade practices, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks)
- Material that would offend contemporary standards of taste and decency
- Material which would bring the Council into disrepute
- Personal details or references to councillors, council staff or third parties, which may breach privacy laws
- Spam, meaning the distribution of unsolicited bulk electronic messages
- Statements which may be considered bullying or harassment.

If you have any doubt about applying the provisions of this policy, check with the CEO before using social media to communicate. Depending upon the nature of the issue and potential risk, it may also be appropriate to consider seeking legal advice.

Authorisation

Ensure appropriate authorisation has been obtained before using social media, including but not limited to uploading content and acting as a spokesperson on behalf of Council.

Expertise

Do not comment outside your area of expertise. Do not commit Council to actions or undertakings.

Disclosure

Only discuss publicly available information. Do not disclose confidential information, internal discussions or decisions of Council, employees or third parties. This includes publishing confidential, personal or private information where there is sufficient detail for potential identification of councillors, Council staff or third parties.

Accuracy

Be accurate, constructive, helpful and informative. Correct any errors as soon as practicable. Do not publish information or make statements which you know to be false or may reasonably be taken to be misleading or deceptive.

Identity

Be clear about professional identity or any vested interests. Do not use fictitious names or identities that deliberately intend to deceive, mislead or lie. Do not participate anonymously or covertly via a third party or agency.

Opinion

Clearly separate personal opinions from professional ones and be mindful of Council's Code of Conduct when discussing or commenting on council matters. In general, don't express personal opinions using Council tags or other identifications. Only where this is not possible, consider using a formal disclaimer to separate official council positions from personal opinions and distance council from comments made by public and other outside interests.

Privacy

Be sensitive to the privacy of others. Seek permission from anyone who appears in any photographs, video or other footage before sharing these via any form of social media. If asked to remove materials do so as soon as practicable.

Intellectual Property

Seek permission from the creator or copyright owner to use or reproduce copyright material including applications, audio tracks (speeches, songs), footage (video), graphics (graphs, charts and logos), images, artwork, photographs, publications or music. Also seek permission before publishing or uploading material in which the intellectual property rights, such as Trademarks, are owned by a third party e.g. company logos. Seek permission from the website's owner wherever possible before linking to another site (including a social media application).

Defamation

Do not comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload or share content that is malicious or defamatory. This includes statements which may negatively impact the reputation of another.

Reward

Do not publish content in exchange for reward of any kind.

Transparency

Do not seek to buy or recompense favourable social media commentary. Encourage online publishers to be open and transparent in how they engage with, or review council personnel, services or wares.

Political bias

Do not endorse any political affinity or allegiance.

Respect

Always be courteous, patient and respectful of others' opinions, including detractors.

Discrimination

Be mindful of anti-discrimination laws and do not publish statements or information which may be discriminatory.

Language

Be mindful of language and expression.

State of Mind

Do not use social media when inebriated, irritated, upset or tired.

Be Safe

Protect your personal privacy and guard against identity theft.

Media

Do not issue statements or make announcements through social media channels unless authorised. Do not respond directly if approached by media for comment through social media.

Refer the inquiry to the CEO.

Modification and moderation

Ensure that any social media sites created or contributed to can be readily edited, improved or removed and appropriately moderated.

Access

Be mindful of the requisite government web standards for accessibility. Information made available via non-compliant platforms should be made accessible in another form where practical.

Be Responsive

Specify the type of comments and feedback that will receive a response and clearly communicate a target response time. Make it easy for audiences to reach Council via other methods by publishing Council's phone number, generic email, Facebook, Skype and Twitter accounts.

Roles and responsibilities

Members

- Seek approval for any council branding of social media;
- Register social media account/tools/site with the CEO;
- Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy;
- Seek training and development for using social media;
- Seek advice from the CEO if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy.

Staff and Contractors

- Seek approval from relevant manager for business strategy incorporating social media
- Seek advice and authorisation from CEO on using social media and developing a communications plan to support business strategy Seek approval for council branding of social media;
- Register social media account/tools/site with the CEO;
- Seek training and development for using social media;
- Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy;
- Maintain records of email addresses, comments, 'friends', followers and printed copies or electronic 'screen grabs' when using externally hosted sites to the extent practicable;
- Seek advice from the CEO if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy;
- Ensure relevant contractors are provided with a copy of this policy.
- Familiarise self with the End User Licence Agreements of any external social media tools being used.

Managers

- Approve business strategy incorporating use of social media;
- Ensure staff consult and obtain authorisation from the CEO on their planned use of social media ensure contractors are provided with a copy of the social media policy;
- Offer training for staff using social media; Authorise use of social media tools for conducting Council business;
- Provide advice and assist with the development of communication plans using social media;
- Educate councillors, staff and contractors about this policy and their responsibilities when using social media;

- Advise appropriate precautions e.g. disclaimers;
- Maintain a register of social media being used for conducting Council;
- business including records of the business case for using social media, its strategic imperative, the intended administrator, URL, login, password and audience;
- Assist staff to retain some record explaining the context or purpose of social media, and a sample of posts where it is impractical to retain large volumes of screen grabs;
- Monitor social media accounts/tools/sites registered for conducting Council business;
- Monitor social media for references to the Shire of Peppermint Grove;
- Seek legal advice as appropriate where an issue is likely to be contentious or may create legal risk for Council;
- Advise IT of approval to access social media for business purposes.

Corporate and Community Services

- Facilitate secure access to support delivery of council business via social media;
- Regularly back up and archive internally hosted social media sites.
- Authorise use of social media tools for conducting Council business;
- Provide advice and assist with the development of communication plans using social media;
- Educate councillors, staff and contractors about this policy and their responsibilities when using social Media;
- Advise appropriate precautions e.g. disclaimers Maintain a register of social media being used for conducting Council business including records of the business case for using social media, its strategic imperative, the intended administrator, URL, login, password and audience;
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Shire of Peppermint Grove

Enforcement

The Shire of Peppermint Grove actively monitors social media for relevant contributions that impact on the Shire, its operations and reputation. The Shire will be able to find and act upon – contributions made by councillors and staff if deemed necessary.

This policy will be published and promoted to councillors and staff of the Shire of Peppermint Grove. Breaching this policy may result in disciplinary action, performance management and review. Serious breaches may result in suspension or termination of employment or association. The Shire of Peppermint Grove reserves the right to remove, where possible, content that violates this policy or any associated policies.

Related Procedure	Community Engagement Policy Shire of Peppermint Grove Code of Conduct Shire of Peppermint Grove employment contracts Shire of Peppermint Grove Human Resource Policy Shire of Peppermint Grove Information and Communications Technology Policy
Related Local Law/Legislation	Copyright Act 1968 Fair Work Act 2009 Freedom of Information Act 1992 Local Government Act 1995 Equal Opportunity Act 1984 Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 Spam Act 2003 Privacy Act 1988 Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Act 2024 (PRIS Act)
Adopted/Amended	December 2015
Reviewed	22 September 2026