



# LLANHARAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS

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## 1. Policy statement

1.1. This guidance is intended to help Councillors make appropriate decisions about the use of digital platforms including social networking sites, forums, message boards, blogs and comments, such as X (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and LinkedIn and to help ensure they remain compliant with the Local Government Code of Conduct. This list is not exhaustive and is intended to cover all publicly accessible digital platforms.

1.2. Adherence to the guidance is recommended but is discretionary.

## 2. The basis of the guidance

2.1. All members must comply with the Local Government Code of Conduct. This applies whenever they are acting, or could reasonably be perceived as acting, in their official capacity. Social media posts that identify them as councillors or that comment on council business will come under this remit as may personal accounts that do not identify the member as a Councillor under certain circumstances.

2.2. This guidance sets suggestions for members' online behaviour. As such, it is advisory and does not override statutory rights such as freedom of political expression.

2.3. The council has no authority over posts made on Councillors personal social media accounts.



### **3. Responsibility for implementation of the guidance**

- 3.1. Individual councillors are responsible for their own actions and online behaviour as far as it applies to the Code of Conduct.
- 3.2. The Clerk may offer advice to members upon request or if they feel it appropriate but shall not actively or routinely monitor the social media activity of members without cause.
- 3.3. The RCTCBC Monitoring Officer may offer further advice as far as online behaviour applies to the Code of Conduct.

### **4. Official use of Council social media accounts**

- 4.1. Councillors shall not have access to or post on the Council's official social media accounts.
- 4.2. Councillors are free to share and comment on the Council's official social media accounts.
- 4.3. The Council reserves the right to moderate its accounts, including removing or hiding content or comments.

### **5. Personal use of social media by members**

- 5.1. Members are bound by the Local Government Code of Conduct in their use of personal social media accounts.
- 5.2. Members are encouraged to share posts from the official page to their own personal pages to increase visibility and reach, but they should not imply that these accounts or their content represent the Council as a whole. They should use disclaimers when expressing personal views.
- 5.3. Members should not disclose confidential or sensitive Council information that is not already in the public domain.
- 5.4. Members must not post content that can be reasonably considered to constitute harassment, bullying, or discrimination against other councillors, council employees or members of the public.
- 5.5. The Ombudsman's Guide to the Code of Conduct states:  
You must not behave in a way which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or authority into disrepute at any time. As a member, your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than those of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions in both your public and private life



might have an adverse impact on your Council. Dishonest and deceitful behaviour will bring your Council into disrepute, as may conduct which results in a criminal conviction, especially if it involves dishonest, threatening or violent behaviour, even if the behaviour happens in your private life. Making unfair or inaccurate criticism of your Council in a public arena might well be regarded as bringing your Council into disrepute. Inappropriate e-mails to constituents or posts on social media might well bring the office of the member into disrepute. (And therefore, constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct.)

5.6. Members should avoid any personal use of social media that would be reasonably considered likely to bring the Council into disrepute. This may include:

5.6.1. Posting misleading or hostile comments about the Council on social media or in public forums.

5.6.2. Posting verbally abusive content aimed at members of the public, other councillors or council employees or the council as a body.

5.6.3. Attempting to gain personal benefits by using Council status (e.g., discounts, favours).

5.6.4. Offensive or discriminatory comments online that may damage public confidence in the Council.

5.6.5. Online sharing, discussing or commenting negatively on internal disputes between Council members, staff or others

5.6.6. Posting obscene, offensive or illegal material online.

5.7. The Council will not:

5.7.1. Monitor personal social media accounts without cause.

5.7.2. Restrict or attempt to restrict lawful individual opinions unrelated to Council business (subject to the clauses above).

5.7.3. Require prior approval for personal posts.

## **6. Breaches of this guidance**

The Code of Conduct on which this guidance is based is overseen by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, represented locally by the Monitoring Officer of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council. Any conduct by a member which may reasonably be considered a breach of it should be reported to the Monitoring Officer and not to the Clerk of the Council, the Chair of the Council or the Council as a body.



Failure or refusal to sign an acknowledgement does not affect the application of this policy, which will apply to all employees from the date of issue.