WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY 2018

WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

WELCOME…

Finding a new way to engage with our residents…

For many of us, social media is now a staple part of our lives, which we access on a daily, if not hourly sometimes, basis! The same goes for our residents; social media tools are a valuable way of engaging with and getting messages to and from our local community.

The benefits to the council of having a presence on social networks include:

- Interacting with the community and residents in a non-corporate environment;
- Providing opportunities for officers and members to be more open and democratic by engaging with people;
- Demonstrating our corporate values of being community focussed, open and transparent;
- Enhancing the council's reputation by providing good quality, timely customer service and information.

In this document, you will find how the Council manages its social media presence, and what you can do in your service areas.

MEET THE TEAM...

Corporately, social media is managed by the Media Team. We manage the **@warwick_dc** Twitter account and have an overview and give advice on other social media accounts run by other departments in the council. If you are thinking of setting up your own social media account, be it Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Google+ or any others, for work purposes, then please contact us first to discuss.

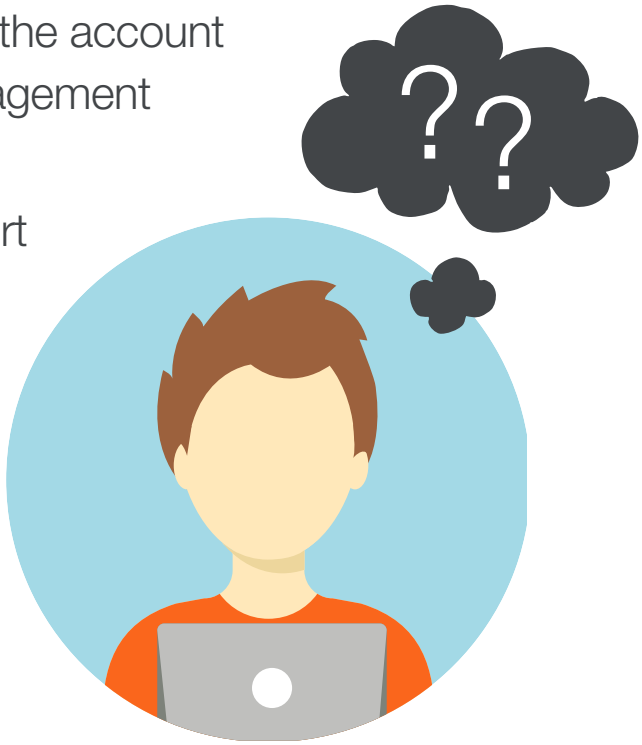
- **Nicki Curwood** Marketing and Communications Manager
- **Nicola Mills** Marketing and Communications Officer
- **Kristopher Walton** Digital Content & Social Media Officer
- **Matthew Pearce** Website Service Manager

Contact us on **ext 6069** or email **media@warwickdc.gov.uk**

SETTING UP A SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILE

Before setting up any kind of social media profile for work purposes, think about the following:

- What are you hoping to achieve?
- Is your target audience on social media?
- Are you going to be updating frequently with a variation in content?
- Could your messages be more successful when promoted from the corporate account?
- Who is going to manage and monitor the account every single day?
- What support will you need from the rest of your team?
- Does everyone agree on your goals for the account and are they willing to pick up the management of it when you are not available?
- How are you going to monitor and report back on the account's successes and failures?
- Has this been agreed by your Service Area Manager?
- How are you going to access this account, particularly if it requires out of hours monitoring?



Speak to the Media Team first!

When setting up your account…

1. Speak to the Media Team first!
2. Your account must reference Warwick District Council in some way, i.e. **@WDCLifeline**. It should also be generic, so, for example, if you left the Council, could someone else pick it up without having to change the name? **@tominplanning** for example, would not be allowed as a name; **@wdcplanning** would.
3. Once you have set up your account, you need to tell the Media Team your username and password. The Media Team and the WDC web manager have the right to access and take control of your account at any time if we feel it is being misused in any way. Your account details will be kept secure and only used if absolutely necessary.
4. Make sure you put aside some time each day to thoroughly check your account and respond to any queries – a good start might be 20 minutes in the morning and 20 minutes in the afternoon.
5. Your profile description should advise this is an official WDC account with a link to the website. Try to avoid using the WDC logo as the profile picture, as too many accounts with the same image can cause confusion.

6. Think about how you could brand your service area's profile – speak to the Design team to discuss this.

   It should also state when the twitter account will be monitored, for example between the hours of 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday. You don't want your followers to have an expectation that they will get a response on a Saturday afternoon, if no one is around to monitor the account. Make this clear.

7. All official WDC social media accounts must be listed on our website. Please speak to Kris Walton about this.

SOCIAL MEDIA ETIQUETTE

Remember you are representing the council; use the same tone of language and politeness that you would use in any other form of communication (i.e. letter, email, face to face). The only difference is that you need to keep the details short and to the point and remember to be friendly.

Don't get drawn in to arguments with people – if you feel a situation is escalating, ask the other person for their direct contact details or move the conversation to DM (direct message).

Always respond to genuine questions – if someone is clearly baiting or not asking a direct question, then you are within your rights not to respond. If you have been asked a genuine question, you should always strive to answer as soon as possible. If you don't know the answer, tell the person that you will find out and state when you will get back to them.

Things to think about…

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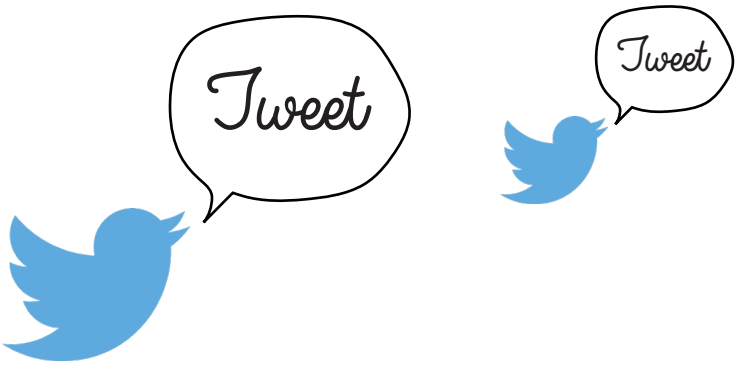
Concerns around social networks normally relate to the fact that anybody can affect the online content and that, as a result, the credibility or legality of web content could suffer.

We need to ensure that:

- Our credibility and reputation are not damaged;
- The public are clear which sites actually represent the council;
- We avoid legal risks and are aware that our social network content is subject to copyright, data protection and freedom of information legislation.
- There are benefits to having a presence on social network sites for the council and the community.
- Staff and members setting up a site or contributing to a site that represents the council or appears to represent the council must follow the set procedure and guidelines stated in this policy.
- Social media is a two way communication tool between WDC and our customers. Used effectively and in line with this Policy, WDC social media sites offer a great opportunity for engagement and interaction with our customers.

ABOUT TWITTER…



We cannot control what people are going to say about us online, they will do that whether we have a presence or not. What we can control is how we effectively get a strong and clear message out to answer their concerns. Twitter is a real-time communication tool that allows you to interact with other Twitter uses, using short (280 characters or less) messages. If you are completely new to Twitter, please contact the Media Team and we will organise a brief session to go through it with you.

REMEMBER Twitter is a two way communication tool. It should enable swift and direct communication between WDC and our customers. Twitter is a brilliant communication tool as long as our customers know and trust us to respond.

All tweets issued on behalf of WDC need to adhere to this policy. Failure to do so may result in your service area Twitter accounts being temporarily closed by the Media Team and reviewed.

Tweeting good practice

The culture of Twitter is that users expect interactions and

responses to be immediate. A tweet should be responded to as soon as possible, certainly within 24 hours. If an answer requires research, then a holding response of, 'Thank you for your Tweet, we will get back to you as soon as possible' should be issued. Proactive tweets should, in the first instance, be informative. Your followers do not need to know about internal or personal matters. They are also not interested in mundane news such as, someone has brought cakes in to the office. You should also avoid using a corporate Twitter account for fundraising or advertising non-council products and services.

Your tone of voice should be friendly, informative and consistent. Twitter is to be used as an information sharing tool, and not just for marketing.

Ask yourself, is the information you want to distribute of interest to my followers? Does it enhance their lives in any way?

Using #hashtags

Hashtags allow you to join in with other conversations and let

people know what you are tweeting about without tweeting them directly. For instance, you could write a tweet using the hashtag #generalelection, knowing that anyone searching that hashtag might now see your tweets, therefore expanding your audience. For further advice about effectively using hashtags, contact the Media Team.

Adding photos

Adding photos to your tweets can make them more attractive for a reader if they are just scrolling through their newsfeed. Try and add photos if you can, but only if they are relevant and enhance your message. Where possible, avoid using stock images as Twitter users will not engage with these.

Who to make contact with

The aim of Twitter is to get as many relevant, interested parties following you as possible in order to spread your message far and wide. You can start by looking at other similar Twitter accounts to see who they are following and start following them and their followers. You can also search local influential people, journalists, broadcasters, bloggers, partner organisations etc. and see who they follow. Don't be afraid to follow other people – if you are following someone, they are more likely to follow you back.

Retweeting and liking

Retweeting someone is a good way to share their interesting messages. For example, if you see something that the local police has tweeted and think your followers may benefit from seeing the message, then you can retweet it.

The more retweets you can get for your own messages, the better. This means that more people are seeing your tweets! Before retweeting anything, think about whether it is appropriate and what our residents might think when they read it – will they appreciate us sharing the message, or will they think we are sitting around wasting time?

There is often the belief that 'retweets do not equal endorsements'. However, simply retweeting someone else's message still gives the impression that this is something that you, or the organisation, believe in.

If it is something that you are sharing to generate discussion, then 'quote' the tweet and add your own words to it, in order to provide context and a reason for you sharing the tweet.

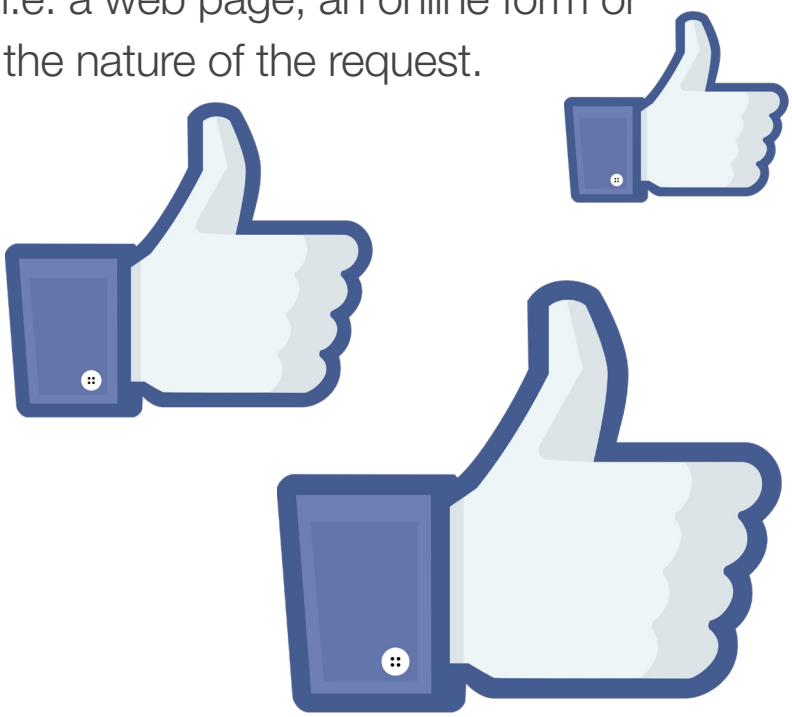
Liking something is just the same as on Facebook – you are acknowledging that you like the tweet.

ABOUT FACEBOOK…

Tools for monitoring

The Media Team uses Hootsuite to monitor and manage its social media accounts. There is a charge associated with this, so please see the Media Team before setting up a Hootsuite or Tweetdeck account. Using Hootsuite enables us to post ow.ly links, which are shortened versions of web addresses and are trackable. If you think you might want to post a lot of links and then report on them, please talk to us.

Link back to the WDC website as standard. For service requests, point customers to the appropriate channel so that their request can be recorded and tracked i.e. a web page, an online form or phone number depending on the nature of the request.



The majority of people now have Facebook accounts and know how they work. WDC doesn't have a corporate Facebook account but there are a couple of departments that do, the local dog warden is a very good example. Facebook accounts take a lot of work because people can write lengthy dialogue that will need responding to and you have a lot more space to fill with images and longer posts. We recommend you contact the Media Team if you want to set up a Facebook account. We will also be able to discuss using Facebook to boost your posts so that you can maximise the number of people that see them – there is a charge associated with this.

About other social media channels…

There are many social media channels, such as youtube, Instagram, Snapchat, Whatsapp etc. with new ones coming and going every day. If you want to set up a different social media account, please speak to the Media Team.

A few other things to remember…

When you are representing (or giving the appearance of representing) the council, social networking sites and applications:

- Once you've said it, it's out there and you can't take it back! Everything happens at lightning speed on social media, so think before you post.

- Must not be used to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claims for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the council into disrepute.
- Must not be used for party political purposes as the council is not permitted to publish material which 'in whole or part appears to affect public support for a political party' (LGA 1986). Be aware of the time in the run up to Elections, known as Purdah. The Media Team can provide more information on Purdah if necessary and a message is usually put on the intranet when this phase is entered with an explanation.
- Must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, personal commercial ventures or personal campaigns.
- Must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner.
- Must not be used for actions that would put council representatives in breach of Council Codes of Conduct or policies relating to elected members or staff.
- Must not breach the council's misconduct, equal opportunities or bullying and harassment policies.

In addition, council resources (e.g. a council computer) must not be used to support a political party in a personal capacity on social network sites.

Please refer to the Internet Acceptable Usage Policy (inc. Social Media) on the intranet for more information on using social media at work.

Any breach of this policy by staff may lead to disciplinary action being taken and, in cases of gross misconduct, termination of employment without notice.
Some cases may result in the council informing the police and criminal action may follow. For members, references in this policy to disciplinary action will mean referral to the Standards Committee and this document will be treated as a local protocol for this purpose. Any breach of this policy by suppliers will be subject to appropriate action by the relevant Deputy Chief Executive.

Should the council be sued due to misuse of Council ICT equipment or the actions of a user which contravene this policy, the council reserves the right to claim damages from the authorised user concerned.

These guidelines also apply to your personal accounts if you mention that you work at Warwick District Council and you have colleagues that are friends or followers of your social media accounts.

Please refer to the Internet Acceptable Usage Policy (inc. Social Media) on the intranet.

YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA CHECKLIST

Before setting up a WDC social media account, you must:

- Chat through your proposed social media account with the Media Team to ensure the account is appropriate. The account will then be approved by the Media Team and you can set it up. YES

Be clear on the aims and objectives of your social media account:

- Have your target market(s) been identified? YES
- Are you clear who your audience is? YES
- "Tone of Voice' – will the social media account have a consistent 'tone of voice' and not vary according to the person using the account? YES
- Is your social media site bringing something new and not just replicating content on existing WDC web sites or social media accounts? YES

- WDC social media accounts are to be used as a two way communication tool. Are procedures in place to ensure the opportunity for conversation on social media sites between WDC and its customers?

YES

- Have procedures been put in place to ensure the social media accounts are monitored on a daily basis?

YES

- Are procedures in place to ensure the content will be kept up to date?

YES

- Who in your team will monitor the content to see if it is appropriate?

YES

- Is content in 'plain English'?

YES

- WDC's social media accounts are monitored by the Media Team for appropriateness, accessibility, content and tone. It is advisable that a minimum of two staff members have access to the social media site to help ensure appropriate use. Do a minimum of two staff members have access to the social media account?

YES

- Have all staff using social media had social media training? Social media training can be requested from the Marketing and Communications manager. All staff using social media must read WDC social media policy and fill out this checklist.

YES

- Are procedures in place to secure the privacy of WDC staff using the social media account and its' customers?

YES

- Are all staff aware of 'Purdah' and the restriction on publicity for members/ councillors/political parties in the run up to elections?

YES

- Has a system of monitoring the effectiveness of your social media accounts been set up?

YES

- Is it clear who will close the account when it is no longer required?

YES

- Has your Service Area Manager agreed to the account being set up?

YES

Important news should go on the website as well, not just social media. 160,000 people visit the website every month and pages are relatively static i.e. they remain in place for hours, days, weeks. On the other hand Twitter is live and constantly updated. On average around 5% of an account's followers (we have 9000) see any single tweet so we cannot rely on it solely for important news or announcements.