

Brixham Town Council

Social Media Networking Policy



Review History

Reviewed: May 2010, May 2011, May 2012, July 2013

Date of next review: May 2014

1. The Advantages Of Social Media Networking

- It enables Brixham Town Council to reach a much wider audience, especially some hard to reach groups
- It is an additional method of keeping people notified of events, news, consultations, or anything worthy of notification, even emergency situations.
- It is an excellent method of communication not requiring mass email, giving the ability to instantly spread information to a target audience.
- It allows people to keep Brixham Town Council in their minds on a daily basis – anyone who is a fan/follower on Facebook/Twitter will be reminded of us periodically via our status updates, which will automatically appear in their notifications.
- It enables us to create a ‘community’ and gives people the opportunity to contribute, showing that we are interested in more than just a one-dimensional relationship.
- It is an additional method of consultation.
- It’s free to set up a profile and, using the technology available to us, regular status updates/tweets can be made quickly attracting greater traffic to our website, and encourage greater involvement, with minimal effort.

2. Terms of use of Social Media networking applications

Content

Those using the Social Media networks must not use the facility:

- 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.
- For party political purposes or specific campaigning 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)
- For the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns.
- To be used in an abusive or hateful manner.
- For actions that would put Council representatives in breach of the Code of Conduct or policies relating to Elected Members or staff.

Other users

Where individuals from partner organisations are involved and are acting on behalf of the Council, they will also be expected to comply with the relevant Council policies.

Terms of Use

It is also important to ensure that members of the public and other users of online services know when a social networking application is being used for official Council purposes. All Council representatives must adhere to the following requirements:

- They must only use the generic Brixham Town Council email addresses (or that of their own reputable organisation if they are not employed by the Council) for user accounts which will be used for official Council purposes. No personal email addresses should be used.
- Where social networking applications are being managed by Council representatives, appropriate feedback and complaints information must be published in a prominent place which is easily accessible to other users.
- The use of the Council's logo and other branding elements should be used where appropriate to indicate the Council's support. The logo should not be used on social networking applications which are unrelated to or are not representative of the Council's official position.
- Council representatives should ensure that any contributions they make are professional and uphold the reputation of the Council.
- Council representatives must not promote or comment on political matters or issues that may be regarded as such.

Election protocol

All users need to be aware that applications may be closed for a defined period before local and national elections in order to comply with legislation which affects local authorities.

3. Enforcement

Any breach of the Terms of Use could result in the application or offending content being removed and the publishing rights of the responsible Council representative being suspended.

The Town Council reserves the right to close any applications, or remove content published by Council representatives which may adversely affect the reputation of the Council or put it at risk of legal action.

Any communications or content published that causes damage to the Council, any of its employees or any third party's reputation may amount to misconduct or gross misconduct to which the Council's Disciplinary Procedure applies.

4. Data Protection

As a Town Council we conform to Data Protection legislation in relation to all personal data that we hold, we are bound by the principles mentioned in the Act. Constant monitoring of our social networking sites is needed to ensure we do not breach legislation – hence the constraints that have been placed to limit this risk.

Facebook and Twitter both have their own Privacy Policies in place which users agree to when they register with the site and they are able to control what personal information is available and who can see it through their privacy settings. No personal information is held at any time by Brixham Town Council.

5. Freedom of Information

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Brixham Town Council is obliged to release certain information to the public. Information cannot be included on these two social networking sites that is not already publicly accessible on our website or Publication Scheme.

6. Risk

There are three main categories of risk when creating pages on any Social Networking sites:

- risk to the reputation of the Council
- technological risk
- risk to productivity of the Council's workforce

When creating content on Facebook and Twitter all three of these categories will be considered and appropriate steps taken to minimise them and ensure the Council does not incur unnecessary risk. If at any point it is felt that these risks outweigh the benefits, the content will be removed, access permissions denied or the applications withdrawn from use.

7. Restrictions:

No emails to be sent to personal email addresses under any circumstances. Information should be sent via status updates only. No work/personal email addresses should be used.

TWITTER Content:

Potential uses:

Planning applications

Jobs

Press releases

Events

Consultations

Emergency situations (i.e. school closures, swine flu, etc.)

Hootsuite (toolbox): interface which allows you to manage multiple profiles; pre-schedule tweets, RSS feeds and statistics <http://hootsuite.com/>

Further Information

Cabinet Office: [Power of Information Taskforce Report, Feb 09](#)

Cabinet Office: [Template Twitter Strategy for Government Departments](#)

Local Government Engagement Online Research: [UK Local Councils Twitter Accounts](#)
(April 09)

Public Sector Forums: [A Beginners Guide to Twitter](#)

SOCITM Insight: [Web 2.0 What it is and Why it matters](#)