



MEDIA POLICY

Adopted: 29 July 2020

TRIM 182381.2018



MEDIA POLICY

1. PURPOSE/ OBJECTIVE

- a) To support positive engagement with the media, including social media, by Councillors and Council staff both in professional and personal capacities.
- b) To protect the reputation of the Council, community and staff and support key directions outlined in the Operational Plan including Creating Connection, Generating Opportunity and Leading through Collaboration.

2. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Local Government Act 1993

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1. A policy on media use, particularly social media, has been requested by Council.

3.1.1 This policy has been developed to assist Liverpool City Council Councillors and staff respond to enquiries from journalists and use social media in an informed and appropriate manner. The policy sets guidelines for preparing media releases, responding to enquiries and using social media.

3.1.3 Liverpool Council's Code of Conduct is also relevant when considering appropriate interaction with the media.

3.1.2 The policy covers: Councillors; Council staff; service providers; contractors employed by Council; volunteers; apprentices or trainees; and work experience students. Implementation of the Policy will be monitored by the Mayor, CEO and Communications Manager.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1.1 The Mayor is the official spokesperson of the governing body of Council.

4.1.2 The CEO, who is responsible for the day-to-day management of Council, is the spokesperson on operational matters.

4.1.5 Councillors may provide the media with comment, or post on social media, as long as they make clear this is provided as their own personal opinion and does not represent the official position of Council.

4.1.6 Councillors are to remember that the Mayor and CEO are the official spokespersons on all matters.

4.1.7 The Mayor may nominate another Councillor to act as an official Council spokesperson for an issue, event or topic as required

4.1.8 Council staff are to refer all media enquiries to the Communications Manager. Council staff may not speak to reporters or provide background information without the express prior approval of the CEO or Communications Manager.

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- 4.1.9 The CEO may nominate other staff to act as spokespeople for the Council as appropriate. For example, the Director of Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre may speak to the media at any time about events.
- 4.1.10 The Communications unit is responsible for preparing media materials in consultation with relevant Council staff. The Mayor, and/or CEO when relevant, must approve all media releases and media responses.
- 4.1.11 The Communications Manager is responsible for co-ordinating and issuing media materials. Social media posts and responses based on pre-approved material may be approved by the Communications Manager.

4.2 Media releases

- 4.2.1 Staff may prepare draft media releases but they must be forwarded to the Communications Manager for approval, editing and distribution. The Director, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, may approve promotional material.
- 4.2.2 A media release should never be issued quoting a Councillor or member of staff without that person's prior knowledge.
- 4.2.3 Staff with specialist knowledge may be quoted in media releases with the permission of the CEO.
- 4.2.4 All new employees are to be given Council's Media Policy as a part of the induction process.

4.3 Dealing with the media

- 4.3.1 Council employees may not provide any comment or information to the media with the intention of contesting or undermining Council policy or casting Council, Councillors or Council staff in a negative light.
- 4.3.2 In the event of an industrial dispute (or an incident likely to lead to an industrial dispute), statements on behalf of Council employees should be issued via the relevant union.
- 4.3.3 When appropriate, a Council employee may become the sole spokesperson on a specific issue, event or initiative within their operational portfolio, to ensure consistency of message.
- 4.3.4 Council staff should treat all media outlets fairly and should avoid giving one outlet preferential treatment.
- 4.3.5 Council staff should avoid providing information "off the record" during media interviews. It is best to assume that everything said to any media representative may appear in a news story.
- 4.3.6 Contractors or service providers employed by Council must refer all media enquiries relating to Council to the Communications Manager.

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4.4 Personal comments

4.4.1 Council employees may speak to the media, post on social media or write letters to the Editor as private individuals. However staff must not distribute information that:

- a) Compromises your capacity to perform your official duties in an unbiased manner;
- b) Has the potential to have a negative impact on your working relationships within the council or with external parties;
- c) Is offensive, humiliating, threatening or intimidating to other council officials or those that deal with the council;
- d) Has the capacity to damage the council's reputation or contains content about the council that may be misleading or deceptive;
- e) Divulges confidential council information;
- f) Breaches the privacy of other council officials or those that deal with council;
- g) Contains allegations of suspected breaches of this code or information about the consideration of a matter under this code or any other code pertaining to Conduct; or
- h) Could be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of the council where you have not been authorised to make such comment.

4.5 Council's use of social media

4.5.1 Social media is one of many communication channels for Council to engage with the community.

4.5.2 Posts by authorised officers must:

- a) Be honest, polite and considerate;
- b) Include appropriate information;
- c) Ensure relevant permissions have been obtained for photos - photos of children under 16 must have the guardian's written permission;
- d) Ensure flyers or posters are approved and works of art are credited as appropriate;
- e) Be accurate and comply with council policies and other relevant requirements;
- f) Adhere to legislation including copyright, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination, harassment and Council's Privacy Management Plan and Code of Conduct; and
- g) Not damage Council's reputation.

4.6 Monitoring posts by users

4.6.1 Authorised officers need to monitor posts regularly during business hours and immediately remove or hide content that:

- a) Defames any individual, group or organisation;
- b) Vilifies any individual, group or organisation because of their political affiliation, race, religion, cultural background, gender, age or sexual identity;
- c) Contains obscene, racist, sexist, threatening or offensive language or images;
- d) Breaches copyright;
- e) Is potentially unlawful; or
- f) Is spam or advertising.

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4.7 Enquiry and response handling

4.7.1 Customer enquiries should be handled as follows:

Type	Action
Simple question, e.g. date of an event	Communications Officer to post reply
Controversial or ongoing topic, e.g. Western Sydney Airport	Communications Officer/Manager to assess and reply if required
Likely to turn into a media issue	Communications Officer/Manager to assess and reply if required
Customer Service Enquiry, e.g. parking, bins	Post: Hi xx, please click on the 'send email' button at the top of the page or Customer Request Form to send your enquiry to Council's Customer Service Or If it appears urgent, pass on to the relevant team and post: Hi xx, thanks for your comment, we have passed this on to Council's xx team to investigate.
Detailed/complex question	Post: Hi xx, please click on the 'send email' button at the top of the page or Customer Request Form to send your enquiry to Council's Customer Service
Abusive/defamatory/racist etc	Hide post
Person or others likely to be in danger	Request a phone number so someone can contact them

4.7.2 Communication to public about roles and responsibilities:

- a) Explicitly set expected response times and state limitations to responding (such as during business hours). Eg We will update and monitor this site during office hours, Monday to Friday;
- b) Recommend appropriate channels for certain types of communication (such as emergencies);
- c) Prohibit posting of offensive material; and
- d) Document action moderator will take if user doesn't comply: modify or delete, then block after three breaches.

4.8 New social media channels

4.8.1 In order to efficiently manage the social media channels used by Council, the Communications Manager must authorise the use of new social media channels that are associated with Liverpool City Council.

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4.9 Personal use of social media

- 4.9.1 Council does not seek to restrict personal use of social media (see above, Personal comments). However, employees need to be aware that their conduct on social media may impact on their employment.
- 4.9.2 It is a staff responsibility to protect Council's brand and reputation.
- 4.9.3 Employees are responsible for content which they publish on social media platforms. They should ensure that their personal comments or opinions are not mistaken for Council's official position. All employees should promote a positive image of Council at all times and are encouraged not to comment on local issues that relate to or involve Council in a way that would reflect poorly on themselves or Council.
- 4.9.4 Staff employed by Liverpool City Council are obliged to follow these conditions:
- a) Employees must not post any statement or comment which brings Council into disrepute;
 - b) Employees must ensure they do not commit Council to any action or initiative without the appropriate authority;
 - c) Employees must not post material that is obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing or discriminatory to any individual, group or organisation, including Liverpool City Council;
 - d) Employees must not disclose official information unless authorised to do so; and
 - e) Employees must ensure appropriate approval is obtained prior to using social media options in an official Council capacity.
- 4.9.5 Breaching this policy may result in disciplinary action, counselling or dismissal.

4.10 Personal use of social media when using Council's resources, or in work time

- 4.10.1 Staff may use social media as long as it does not interfere with their work.

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AUTHORISED BY

Either Council Resolution or Chief Executive Officer

EFFECTIVE FROM

29 July 2020

DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE

Communications

REVIEW DATE

29 July 2022

VERSIONS

The current and previous version of the policy should be set out in the following table.

Version	Amended by	Changes made	Date	TRIM Number
1	Council Resolution	Nil	29 July 2020	182381.2018

THIS POLICY HAS BEEN DEVELOPED IN CONSULTATION WITH

This policy has been developed after consultation with Council staff, the Governance Coordinator and the Executive Management Team.

REFERENCES

Dubbo City Council: Corporate Social Media Policy 2013

Department of Public Works: Official use of social media guidelines, ICT Policy and Coordination Office, December 2010 v.1.0.0

Victorian Department of Health: Social Media Action Plan Part 2: Staff toolkit, Best practice guidelines and templates to help you use social media, 2010

Coffs Harbour City Council: Social Media Policy, October 2012

Gunnedah Council: Social Media Policy, 2013

Parramatta City Council: Social Media Policy

Transport for NSW: The Development of Social Media Policy

City of Ryde: Media Policy 2014

Thomas Tudehope, NSWLGA: Reaching your community – social media for local government, April 2013