

COUNCIL POLICY



Policy name	Social Media Policy
--------------------	---------------------

Abstract

This policy provides the framework for Gunnedah Shire Council's use of social media.

Dates	Policy or amendment approved	15 Jul 2015
	Policy or amendment takes effect	15 Jul 2015
	Policy is due for review (up to 4 years)	15 Jul 2019
Endorsed by	Executive Management Team	
Approved by	Gunnedah Shire Council, at its Ordinary Meeting of Council held 15 Jul 2015 Resolution number: 4.07/15	
Policy Custodian	Manager, Customer and Community Relations	
Relevant to	Residents of Gunnedah Shire Local Government Area Councillor Staff	
Superseded Policies	Social Media Policy 2013	
Related documents	Communications and Media Engagement Policy Code of Conduct – Policy Community Engagement Strategy Community Engagement Matrix Internal Reporting Policy – Public Interest Disclosure Council's Instrument of delegation to the General Manager Council's Operational Plan	
Related legislation	Local Government Act 1993 Local Government (General) Regulations 2005	
File number	878276	

Contents

1. Purpose
2. Scope
3. Definitions
4. Policy principles
5. Policy statement
6. Accountability, roles and responsibilities
7. Acknowledgements
8. Version control and change history

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear parameters and guidelines in relation to Gunnedah Shire Council's (GSC) use of social media tools/sites.

2. Scope

The policy applies to all employees and contractors of GSC and governs the use of social media activities performed on behalf of Gunnedah Shire Council. The policy does not apply to personal use of social media.

All employees are responsible for knowing and understanding the policy.

3. Definitions

Social Media – describes the tools that people use to build online profiles and share content, opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives in the online environment.

4. Policy principles

Social media sites will be used by GSC within the framework of one or more of the following:

- in complement to other communication activities;
- as a point of contact;
- as a way of reaching a larger audience;
- as part of a communication plan;
- as part of a media strategy;
- as part of a community engagement/consultation plan/strategies or;
- as part of a crisis management plan.

Social media sites used by GSC include but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest and other GSC officially hosted and endorsed sites.

GSC will actively and appropriately participate in the conversations on, and engage with the communities of, different social media platforms. This engagement is underpinned by four key objectives. These are to:

- actively and genuinely listen to the users we are connected to;
- inform those users about GSC and its programs;
- consult and involve those users in discussions about GSC and its programs and the wider local government sector, and
- collaborate, engage and empower.

Across any of these objectives, our use of social media will always be:

- credible, transparent and accurate to the best of our knowledge;
- respectful, friendly and professional;
- responsive to the culture and community practices of each platform we establish an account on.

5. Policy Statement

Social Media Use

GSC selectively uses approved social media sites to:

- educate, advise and communicate with the community;
- make GSC more approachable and responsive;
- enhance GSC's reputation;
- develop stronger relationships with community members;
- provide an informal and accessible way for the public to communicate with council;
- support traditional media by broadening its reach and scope;
- promote selected services, events, projects, policies and activities;
- expand Council's community engagement opportunities; and
- provide essential updates to the community during a crisis or emergency.

Administrators

The General Manager is responsible for approving selected staff to be Authorised Council Social Media Administrators (SMAs).

SMAs are the only persons authorised to develop social media content on behalf of GSC.

SMAs are bound by this policy and Council's Code of Conduct Policy and Information Technology Policies.

SMAs are to post as a council representative and are not required to use their own name, give identifying information or personal contact details.

General use of Social Media

When contributing to any online service you should be:

- professional in the use of social media;
- accurate, fair and thorough;
- upfront about mistakes and provide corrections;
- respectful and encourage constructive criticism and deliberation;
- professional, relevant and responsive;
- aware of the context of the conversation;
- mindful that your tone and language appropriately represent GSC and the brand;
- mindful that you are speaking and communicating on behalf of GSC, and should avoid contributions that disclose personal information, or reflect a personal opinion;
- careful to never disclose the login or security credentials of the account;
- careful to never engage in an activity that might lead to the vulnerability of the account.

Where possible you should also:

- listen before you contribute;
- write only about things you know;
- share non-confidential, useful and relevant information from GSC and from other sources;
- cite your sources;
- link to the GSC website, one of our satellite websites or another credible source.

You should not engage in behaviour that:

- is bullying, intimidating, harassing, hateful, threatening or discriminatory;
- is unlawful, misleading, fraudulent or malicious;
- is in contravention of the Terms of Use of any online service we engage on;
- is suggestive of conducting business with a client;
- disclosed confidential and proprietary information in relation to any of our clients, partners or suppliers;
- discloses any information that may advantage or disadvantage applicants, clients, partners or suppliers.
- is contrary to that prescribed in Council's Code of Conduct

Social Media Content

Examples of what sorts of information that maybe placed on social media outlets are as follows:

- Road closure information;
- Event information;
- Policy exhibition information;
- Comments relating to relevant or local issues.

Monitoring Social Media

The Manager of Customer and Community Relations will monitor content posted by SMAs on all official social media outlets to ensure that it adheres to the above requirements.

Out of Hours Monitoring and Responding to Public Comments

When appropriate, GSCs social media sites/accounts will be updated out of business hours by the Manager Customer and Community Relations, Communications Coordinator or Communications Support Officer or approved SMAs.

GSC will respond to public comments requiring a response (not deemed offensive or inappropriate) within a maximum of 24 hours during business hours (8.30am to 5.00pm on weekdays).

During after-hours, comments will be responded to as determined by the Manager Customer and Community Relations and other approved SMAs.

Choosing to participate and respond, as well as when to withdraw from online conversation is at the discretion of the SMA.

Council may not, where an item is for information only, engage in dialogue. Furthermore Council will not continue to exchange dialogue where comments are threatening, unnecessary, repetitive or vexatious.

Offensive Behaviour

GSC will issue public warnings to persons who post any inappropriate, offensive or inflammatory comments. The warnings will advise why the comment is offensive and will then be removed from GSC's page. Where applicable, GSC will request of the social media administrator that they be removed permanently. By way of example Facebook Community Standards are at Attachment A.

If at any point, an SMA becomes uncomfortable or feels threatened online, they should direct concerns to their manager, who will discuss appropriate action with the General Manager.

Records Management

Social Media Account Activity Reports are available upon request.

Management

The Manager, Customer and Community Relations can provide a social media evaluation to SMG upon request.

6. Accountability, roles and responsibilities

6.1 Policy Custodian

Manager, Customer and Community Relations.

6.2 Responsible Officer

All staff are responsible for adhering to this policy, particularly for ensuring they do not use social media to communicate on behalf of GSC unless authorised to do so.

7. Acknowledgements

- NSW Government Social Media Policy and Guidelines
- Local Government Association Tasmania – Social Media Policy Template
- Randwick City Council – Social Media Policy
- Campbelltown City Council – Social Media Policy
- Australia Council for the Arts – Social Media Policy

8. Version control and change history

Date	Version	Approved by & resolution no.	Amendment
15 May 2013	1	Prepared for Council	
06 Jul 2015	2	Prepared for Council	Policy amended to reflect current and future practices.
15 Jul 2015	3	Resolution 4.07/15	

Attachment A

Facebook Community Standards

Facebook gives people around the world the power to publish their own stories, see the world through the eyes of many other people, and connect and share wherever they go. The conversation that happens on Facebook – and the opinions expressed here – mirror the diversity of the people using Facebook.

To balance the needs and interests of a global population, Facebook protects expression that meets the community standards outlined on this page.

Please review these standards. They will help you understand what type of expression is acceptable, and what type of content may be reported and removed.

Violence and Threats

Safety is Facebook's top priority. We remove content and may escalate to law enforcement when we perceive a genuine risk of physical harm, or a direct threat to public safety. You may not credibly threaten others, or organize acts of real-world violence. Organizations with a record of terrorist or violent criminal activity are not allowed to maintain a presence on our site. We also prohibit promoting, planning or celebrating any of your actions if they have, or could, result in financial harm to others, including theft and vandalism.

Self-Harm

Facebook takes threats of self-harm very seriously. We remove any promotion or encouragement of self-mutilation, eating disorders or hard drug abuse. We also work with suicide prevention agencies around the world to provide assistance for people in distress.

Bullying and Harassment

Facebook does not tolerate bullying or harassment. We allow users to speak freely on matters and people of public interest, but take action on all reports of abusive behavior directed at private individuals. Repeatedly targeting other users with unwanted friend requests or messages is a form of harassment.

Hate Speech

Facebook does not permit hate speech, but distinguishes between serious and humorous speech. While we encourage you to challenge ideas, institutions, events, and practices, we do not permit individuals or groups to attack others based on their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability or medical condition.

Graphic Content

People use Facebook to share events through photos and videos. We understand that graphic imagery is a regular component of current events, but must balance the needs of a diverse community. Sharing any graphic content for sadistic pleasure is prohibited.

Nudity and Pornography

Facebook has a strict policy against the sharing of pornographic content and any explicitly sexual content where a minor is involved. We also impose limitations on the display of nudity. We aspire to respect people's right to share content of personal importance, whether those are photos of a sculpture like Michelangelo's David or family photos of a child breastfeeding.

Identity and Privacy

On Facebook people connect using their real names and identities. We ask that you refrain from publishing the personal information of others without their consent. Claiming to be another person, creating a false presence for an organization, or creating multiple accounts undermines community and violates Facebook's terms.

Intellectual Property

Before sharing content on Facebook, please be sure you have the right to do so. We ask that you respect copyrights, trademarks, and other legal rights.

Phishing and Spam

We take the safety of our members seriously and work to prevent attempts to compromise their privacy or security. We also ask that you respect our members by not contacting them for commercial purposes without their consent.

Security

We take the safety of our members seriously and work to prevent attempts to compromise their privacy or security, including those that use fraud or deception. Additionally, we ask that you respect our members by not contacting them for commercial purposes without their consent.

Reporting Abuse

If you see something on Facebook that you believe violates our terms, you should report it to us. Please keep in mind that reporting a piece of content does not guarantee that it will be removed from the site.

Because of the diversity of our community, it's possible that something could be disagreeable or disturbing to you without meeting the criteria for being removed or blocked. For this reason, we also offer personal controls over what you see, such as the ability to hide or quietly cut ties with people, Pages, or applications that offend you.