

RICHMOND VALLEY COUNCIL POLICY REGISTER

Policy No: 1.9.5

Reference: Economic Development - Promotion; Community Relations - Media Liaison; Information Technology - Standards; Corporate Management - Policy

POLICY:	SOCIAL MEDIA
FUNCTION:	Economic Development/Promotion
OBJECTIVE:	To support and facilitate public relations, publicity, promotional activity and external communications
DIRECTORATE:	CORPORATE SERVICES

POLICY

Policy Intent

To set criteria for the use of Social Media by Council, Council employees and all key stakeholders to ensure its correct use and the protection of Council and Council's reputation and that of its Councillors, employees and all key stakeholders.

Background

Social media is a more casual and interactive platform for the dissemination of information and messages and general communication and promotional tool than the traditional media that most individuals, businesses and organisations have relied on to date. To this end, social media can appear to represent personal views rather than those of Council, and vice versa. It is important to present clear direction of its use in order to protect all identities and simultaneously, enhance personal and professional reputations through correct use.

Consideration must also be given to delivering the message professionally while still interacting in the mode of the delivery identified with this medium.

Social media is a powerful communication tool that has a significant impact on all reputations. Councillors and Council employees need to follow the same behavioural standards online as they would in real life. Social media is highly accessible and makes it very easy to say anything about anyone or any organisation. However, the same laws, professional expectations, protocols and guidelines for interacting between users, apply through all online and social media as in the real world.

Organisations and employees are liable for anything they post to social media sites. Everything posted on the web can be very easily traced back to an IP address and specific user or author. Information is backed up often and repeatedly; posts in one forum are often replicated in others through trackbacks, reposts or referencing. Once information is posted it is on public record for a very long time and can be brought, and used, to the present for any reason.

Examples of social media readily available and widely used include (but not limited to):

- **Blogs and discussion forums** are websites that post information or opinion on various issues that are open for comments.
- **Video sharing websites** (i.e. YouTube) allow organisations and individuals to distribute, share and stream video and other audio visual material online
- **Wikis** are online repositories of information to which individuals and organisations can contribute or edit information; a popular example is Wikipedia (an online encyclopedia)
- **Social Networking websites** (i.e. Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Twitter) are online directories that connect people through social and other networks. Social networking websites often include a range of communication mechanisms, like blogs, discussion boards, pin boards, rich media (images and video) and instant messaging.

References

This policy is related to and should be read in conjunction with the following Council Policies, Guidelines and documents:

- Social Media Guidelines
- Website Policy
- Use of Electronic Communications Policy
- Code of Conduct – Councillors/Personnel Policy
- Media Policy
- Positive Working Relationships Policy
- Complaints Handling Procedure
- Staff Delegations of Functions and Authorities.

Scope

This Policy applies to Councillors, Council Directorates, all Council Staff, consultants and contractors engaged by Richmond Valley Council. In reference to the latter, a requirement to comply with this Policy and its Guidelines will be included in contracts. This Policy (and Guidelines) also applies to all entities of Richmond Valley Council.

Strategies

That:

- All designated and authorised Council staff are aware of and comply with all laws and policies for the appropriate protection of Council information;
- Information and views provided are accurate, clear and expressed in such a way that cannot be misrepresented;

- All material, including text and graphics, is accurate in presentation, reproduction, structure, spelling and grammar;
- Online communication is consistent with information and advice being provided through other media and forums;
- All communications are courteous, respectful, constructive and professional;
- Intellectual property, copyright and privacy issues in regard to all parties are taken into account.

Individuals are entitled to engage in a personal capacity on social media platforms. In this capacity the following points must be adhered to by Councillors, Council employees, contractors and consultants:

- remain transparent in your engagement in this media; there is no clear line between work and personal life in social media platforms and as such you should remain factual, honest and respectful in both capacities;
- if you express an opinion you clearly state that they are your own and do not represent those of Council;
- Richmond Valley Council resources must be used in a proper manner. You should not use Council time on the job, computers, internet or email for private blogging or other forms of personal online comment;
- do not use Council's logo or any other images or property, intellectual or otherwise, on personal sites nor for endorsements of any products, causes, political party or candidate or any other purpose;
- avoid any comment that might be interpreted as an official statement on behalf of Richmond Valley Council or that might compromise perceptions of your ability to do your job in an unbiased and professional manner;
- do not post comment or material that might bring Richmond Valley Council into disrepute;
- do not use offensive language or be disparaging of Council or any other parties;
- are mindful of all copyright and intellectual rights of others and of Council;
- obey the Terms of Service and Use of any Social Media platform you engage in.

Breaches of any of the above could result in disciplinary action or termination.

The use of social media will involve record keeping via Council's Enterprise Content Management System.

Outcomes

- Enhanced reputation and profile for Richmond Valley Council as offering a coordinated, high quality communication service using up-to-date technology through cost efficient methods and latest media services and facilities;
- Contribution to building Richmond Valley Council's capacity in the use and utilisation of the latest communication methods;
- Recognition of the need for Council to remain at the forefront of services and facilities used as common-place by its present and future constituents and key stakeholders;

- Enhancing Council's reputation as a leader in the field of embracing the latest technology and methods in the field of communications, promotion, marketing and advertising for the benefit of all key stakeholders and its constituents;
- Increased protection for Council's reputation and image;
- Increased promotion of and communication with Council;
- Employing efficient and effective methodology in the process, procedures for use, maintenance and delivery of service in a way that results in minimal impact and burden on Council and its resources;
- Recognition of the value and economic benefits to be derived from the increased, positive profile of Council and the Richmond Valley overall both in terms of the delivery method and resulting on-going outcomes and returns;
- Greater awareness of the Richmond Valley's natural and man-made assets and potential as an attractive and welcoming region to live, visit and invest;
- Provide an easy and highly accessible tool for communication with Council by all market segments through this market-driven vehicle;
- Minimise risk of litigation for Richmond Valley Council, Councillors, staff and key stakeholders.

Implementation

Use of Social Media is to be undertaken in accordance with the Social Media Policy Guidelines and all other documents of reference noted. The Guidelines contain the criteria, methodology and responsibilities that will need satisfying to receive Council's permission and support.

Legal

To comply with standard procedures and all regulations as obtained in the law of the day.

VARIATION

Council reserves the right to amend this Policy from time to time.