<u>**MALVERN TOWN COUNCIL STAFFING POLICIES**</u>

<u>**USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**</u>

The purpose of these Guidelines is to cover the practicalities of using social media in order to uphold this Strategy and Policy. It covers the standards expected in relation to both work-related and personal use of social media.

<u>What is social media?</u>

Social media is the term commonly given to online tools, channels and interactive media which allow people to interact with individuals, groups or organisations by sharing information, opinions, knowledge, interests and asking questions or participating in online discussion and conversations. Social media includes a range of channels - such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Yammer, Flickr, YouTube, Instagram, blogs and forums – which are gradually replacing traditional media and mass communication methods.

<u>What are the risks?</u>

The following risks are identified with the use of social media:

- Damage to the Council's reputation

- Civil or criminal action relating to breaches of legislation

- Disclosure of confidential information/breach of safeguarding through the use of images or personal data

- Virus or other malware (malicious software) infection/social engineering attacks (sometimes known as 'phishing')

- Potential effect on ICT network performance

- Bullying or witch-hunting

- Lost productivity as a result of personal use of social media during work time

<u>Procedure points</u>

1)      Malvern Town Council staff are encouraged where relevant to use social media via established and authorised organisation accounts, as a means to inform the public and foster openness and engagement with local communities, as well as to promote Malvern Town Council activities.

2)      Malvern Town Council staff are encouraged to use social media for work purposes in an open and honest way to engage with the public. Staff are reminded that action may be

taken as a result of distasteful or offensive postings, slanderous or libellous posts or comments that are political in nature, or may damage the reputation of the Town Council or other staff members.

3)  Employees are permitted to use Council approved social media channels as part of their normal work duties with agreement from the employee's line manager.

4)  During normal working hours, employees are permitted to access and use social media via Council ICT equipment only in their own time (e.g. in break periods), providing it does not interfere with their work and that it is not left running 'in the background', whilst at work.

5)  Outside of normal working hours, the use of Council ICT equipment for personal use must only take place with prior approval from your line manager.

6)  The Council recognises that many employees will also use personal devices (e.g. personal smartphones and tablets) for personal use of social media during break times in working hours.

7)  The following applies to all employees regardless of whether Council or personal equipment is used or when social media is accessed or postings are made:

- Any views stated are personal views

- Ultimately, you must comply with your responsibilities under the Council's Code of Conduct and may be required to remove social media postings that are deemed to be in breach of this policy

- Discussing the Council, your work, clients, partner organisations or the people you work with on social networks should not be considered private, even in a forum with restricted access (such as on someone's Facebook wall).  It is not the same as having an offline discussion among friends or a one-to-one email conversation. Social networks are designed to make sharing as easy as possible, so anything you say may be circulated to a wider audience and could be brought to the attention of Council colleagues, managers, councillors and customers

- You are personally responsible for anything you post online

- You should not do or say anything that may harm the reputation of the Council or undermine your role as a representative of the Council

- You should show proper consideration for the privacy of the people you work with

8)  Any communications that employees make through social media must not:

- Bring the organisation into disrepute, for example by: criticising, disagreeing or arguing with customers, colleagues or managers; making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations/groups or posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content

- Breach confidentiality, for example by: referring to confidential information about an individual (such as a colleague or service user) or the Council

- Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual or group of individuals, and in contravention of the Council's procedures

- Contravene the Council's policies, for example: The Employee Code of Conduct, the Harassment and Bullying policy, or the Equality and Diversity policy

9) The following are specific guidance for employees approved to use social media as part of their job role:

- Ensure Council social media accounts remain secure (e.g. follow normal data security and do not share passwords)

- You should normally use Council-provided equipment

- Be honest, courteous and professional at all times

- Avoid arguments, be positive and add something significant to the conversation

- Only post facts that you are sure of and don't do or say anything illegal

- Remain politically neutral

- Understand the situation and audience before you post

- Advise colleagues before you post if something you say may affect them

- Get permission before you republish copyrighted material

- Don't share confidential or sensitive information, even in private forums

- How you deal with a complaint is as important as the complaint itself

- Nothing you say can be 100% deleted, so always be sure before you post

- Be mindful that journalists monitor social media and may quote you

# EMPLOYEE GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- Employees must be mindful that any online activities/comments made in a public domain, must be compatible with their position within the Council, and safeguard themselves in a professional capacity.

- Protect your own privacy. To ensure that your social network account does not compromise your professional position, ensure that your privacy settings are set correctly.

- Comments made outside work, within the arena of social media, do not remain private and so can have an effect on or have work-related implications. Therefore, comments made through social media, which you may intend to be "private" may still be in contravention of the Employee Code of Conduct, the Harassment and Bullying Policy and/or the Disciplinary Policy. Once something is online, it can be copied and redistributed making it easy to lose control of. Presume everything you post online will be permanent and can be shared.

- Do not discuss work-related issues online, including conversations about service users, complaints, management or disparaging remarks about colleagues or the Council. Even when anonymised, these are likely to be inappropriate. In addition, doing this in the presence of others may be deemed as bullying and/or harassment.

- Do not under any circumstances accept friend requests from a person if you believe it may conflict with your employment.

- Be aware that other users may access your profile and if they find the information and/or images it contains offensive, make a complaint about you to the Council as your employer.

- Ensure that any comments and/or images cannot be deemed defamatory, libelous or in breach of copyright legislation.

- When setting up your profile online consider whether it is appropriate and prudent for you to include a photograph, or provide occupation, employer or work location details.

- You can take action if you find yourself the target of complaints or abuse on social networking sites. Most sites will include mechanisms to report abusive activity and provide support for users who are subject to abuse by others.

- If you do find inappropriate references and/or images of you posted by a 'friend' online you should contact them and the site to have the material removed.

- If you are very concerned about someone else's behaviour online, you should take steps to raise your concerns. If these are work related you should inform your manager.

- Employees should also act in accordance with the Council's Employee Code of Conduct, Internet and Email Acceptable Use Policy, and Harassment and Bullying Procedure.

- Employees should not access social media sites or leave these running in the background during working time, for personal use, on any devices within their control.