



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Adopted Date: 26 March 2014
Policy Number: GRC 0006
Policy Type: Strategic
Responsible Officer: Communications Officer
Department: Executive Office

Version	Decision Number or CEO Approval	Decision Date	History
1	GRC 0006	26 March 2014	Adopted
2	Review		June 2015
3	Reviewed	June 2015	Review June 2018
4	Reviewed following Social Media Project	27 September 2017	Review September 2020
5	Reviewed OM0190/18	24 October 2018	Review October 2019
6	Reviewed	23 October 2019	Review October 2021
7	Reviewed	December 2021	Review December 2024

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for Council to manage and control the communication carried out on social media platforms to ensure that it is professional, appropriate and promotes a positive image of Council, in line with corporate objectives.

2. BACKGROUND

Information technology has changed the way in which people communicate and share information. Goondiwindi Regional Council has established a Facebook page to provide an informal, 'personal' voice to the community, with the following aims/objectives:

- To complement existing communication methods;
- To improve the dissemination of information to the community;
- To improve availability/access to information by the community; and
- To develop Council's online presence to better promote services and brand.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

- a) Social media will be used as a communication tool and to facilitate online collaboration.
- b) Information disseminated through social media will be accurate, authorised and aligned with Council strategies, policies and decisions.
- c) Use of social media will always follow clear identification of objectives and the right tools

to meet those objectives.

- d) Private information will be protected and copyright, privacy and other applicable laws will be taken into account when interacting with social media.
- e) There will continue to be appropriate record keeping of information disseminated or collected via social media.
- f) In developing, posting and responding to content, staff and elected members will uphold the values of the Council by acting with honesty, integrity, courtesy and professionalism and will not be discriminatory, defamatory, harassing or encourage law breaking.

4. SCOPE

This Policy applies to elected members, Council officers, casuals, volunteers, consultants and contractors.

This policy provides direction on:

- Professional use of social media on behalf of Council.
- Personal use of social media in reference to Goondiwindi Regional Council.
- Legal considerations.

5. DEFINITIONS

Social Media

Web-based technology allowing an exchange of dialogue between organisations, communities and individuals. Social media may include (but is not limited to):

- Social networking websites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+)
- Video and photo sharing websites (e.g. Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, SnapChat)
- Blogs, including corporate blogs and personal blogs
- Blogs hosted by media outlets (e.g. 'comments' on news articles, etc.)
- Micro-blogging (e.g. Twitter)
- Wikis and online collaborations (e.g. Wikipedia)
- Forums, discussion boards and groups (e.g. Google groups)
- Vod and podcasting
- Geospatial tagging (e.g. Foursquare, Facebook Check-in)

Terms

- **Publication** and other derivatives of the word refers to any item which has been made public online.
- **Platform** is used to refer to specific forms of social media

- **Post, upload** and **comment** are platform specific terms used for publishing material online.
- **Administration** and other variations of the term refer to the officer/s of a social media platform who publishes content.
- **Block** refers to removing or denying a user access to Council's social media platforms.

6. MANAGEMENT OF COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

- a) Approval must be obtained from the Chief Executive Officer to create any additional social media platforms for use by Council departments, using the New Social Media Platform Request Form.
- b) To become an Authorised Officer, staff must have written approval from the CEO/Director and be listed in the Communications Delegations Register.
- c) The Corporate Communications Team are responsible for the coordination and management of the Corporate GRC social media platforms. Corporate Communications staff must be approved Authorised Officer's.
- d) The Cinema Team are responsible for the coordination and management of the social media related to Goondiwindi Cinema on behalf of Council. Cinema Team staff must be approved Authorised Officer's.
- e) Community comments can be posted on Council's social media pages at any time and be of a positive, negative or neutral nature. Council however, reserves the right to remove certain content such as illegal or offensive material. Material that is reasonably critical of Council will not be deleted. Refer to Appendix 1 – Authorised Officer Duties for management of inappropriate social media content, including blocking of users.
- f) As a minimum requirement, Council will monitor social media content and exchanges at least twice daily, Monday to Friday within standard business hours of 9am - 5pm and establish whether:
 - comments need replies or removal;
 - current content is factual, accurate and up-to-date;
 - posts are relevant;
 - new information needs to be posted.
- g) Council only monitors the social media pages between normal business hours of Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.
- h) Council's social media page is not intended to respond to specific complaints, concerns or questions. The community is expected to use official methods for enquiries e.g. phone, email, Snap, Send, Solve. Comments that ask a question about Council, or a matter related to Council, will generally be advised to contact Council using official methods. Where appropriate and of interest to the general public, Council may respond. Responses should be coordinated with the relevant department and/ or elected official and posted within a reasonable timeframe.

- i) Comments received outside of normal business hours (e.g. after-hours, weekends, public holidays) will be reviewed on the following working day.

7. STAFF & ELECTED MEMBERS USE OF COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA

All Staff

- a) Only Authorised Officers and Elected Officials are able to post content and/or comments on Council's social media platforms e.g. GRC Facebook.
- b) Appendix 1 – Authorised Officers Duties outlines the responsibilities of Authorised Officers for Council social media platforms.

8. PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

All staff (including employees, casuals, contractors) and elected members

- a) When using social media for personal use staff and elected members should give consideration to the following:
 - i. Could what you are doing harm the reputation of Council?
 - ii. Are you disclosing Council material that you are not authorised to disclose?
 - iii. Have you made it clear to others that your contribution is as a private individual?
 - iv. Are you behaving with integrity, respect and accountability?
- b) Staff and elected members may join and participate in official Council social media sites.
- c) Council does not intend to restrict personal use of social media. This Policy does not apply to personal use of social media when no reference or inference is made to Council or related issues.
- d) Staff and elected members can share public information about Council that is, information which can be found on Council's website or Council's Facebook page.
- e) When using social media for personal use the following guidelines must be adhered by staff and elected members:
 - i. Only disclose or discuss publicly available information.
 - ii. Ensure all content is accurate and complies with all relevant Council policies.
 - iii. Do not imply that you are authorised to speak as a representative of Council or give the impression that the views expressed are those of Council.
 - iv. Do not use a Council email address or any Council logos or insignia.
 - v. Do not use the identity or likeness of another employee, contractor or member of Council.
 - vi. Do not post offensive or defamatory comments about the Council, Council staff or elected members.
 - vii. Do not make comments, use location based services (e.g. check-in) or post any material that might otherwise cause damage to Council's reputation.

Elected Members

- c) Elected Members are entitled to create, maintain and update their personal social media pages, subject to the information outlined in this policy.

9. REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS

Breach of Policy

Staff and elected members must comply fully with the policy at all times. Non-compliance is a serious matter and appropriate disciplinary action may be taken.

When in doubt, staff are encouraged to seek further guidance or clarification from the Corporate Communications Team or the Director/CEO in relation to the application of this policy.

Privacy, confidentiality and information security

- a) Do not publish or report on conversations or information that is deemed confidential or classified or deals with matters that are internal in nature.

Copyright

- b) Respect copyright laws and attribute work to the original author/source wherever possible.

Harassment and Bullying

- c) Council's Code of Conduct Policy applies online, including social media websites, and in the physical workplace.
- d) Abusive, harassing, threatening or defaming postings are in breach of Council's Code of Conduct Policy, and may result in disciplinary action being taken.
- e) Workplace bullying and harassment includes any bullying or harassing comments staff make online, including on their own private social networks and when out of office hours.

Defamation

- f) Refrain from posting material that may cause damage to another person, organisation, association or company's reputation and seek further guidance from Mayor, Chief Executive Office or Director if publication of such material is thought to be necessary.

10. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Code of Conduct
- GRC 007 Media Communications
- GRC 024 Information Technology Usage
- GRC 045 Information Privacy
- GRC 046 Information Security

- Social Media Protocol: Records Management (Social Media Records)
- Social Media Protocol: When to Respond to A Comment
- New Social Media Platform Request Form

APPENDIX 1

AUTHORISED OFFICER DUTIES

- a) Once approval has been granted to become an Authorised Officer the following guidelines must be adhered to:
- i. Only publish content that is classified as public information.
 - ii. All content posted is accurate, timely and complies with all relevant Council policies.
 - iii. All content must not disclose personal, confidential or private information.
 - iv. All content is evenly distributed and does not over-promote or bias one service, facility, event, etc. over others. To maintain best practice standards the number of posts per week will be limited per topic, unless special circumstances exist.
 - v. Comments will be respectful of the community and portray Goondiwindi Region Council in a positive way.
 - vi. Generally, posts and links will be Council related and connected to a core service of Council.
 - vii. All content is impartial, apolitical and does not promote elected members or specific members of staff or projects and announcements that have not received approval from the relevant committee or Council.
 - viii. The Corporate Communications Team will provide advice to staff in relation to recommended content for social media posts. Social media should be one component of an overall marketing and communication campaign.
- b) When assessing comments the following guidelines must be adhered to:
- i. Comments by the public will be removed at the discretion of Authorised Officer only if they are deemed to be prejudiced, racist, defamatory, offensive, off-topic, irrelevant, repetitive or otherwise inappropriate. Other comments that may potentially jeopardise Council's financial, legal or operational capacity.
 - ii. Comments or posts that are not Council-related may be removed. This includes promotion of commercial services, products or entities.
 - iii. A rolling list will be compiled and maintained listing blocked users, the rolling list will be provided to the Executive Officers for information/review following each new entry. The rolling list will be saved into Council's Electronic Records System. Also reference Appendix 2 - Moderation Guidelines Posted on GRC Facebook Page.
 - iv. Authorised Officers will be diligent in their consideration of brand, copyright, fair use and trademarks. Also reference section 9 regulatory considerations
 - ix. Adhere to the terms of use and guidelines associated with the relevant social media platform/website.
 - x. Evaluate social media through simple metrics, which are sustainable and related to the desired outcomes.

APPENDIX 2

MODERATION GUIDELINES – COUNCIL’S FACEBOOK PAGE

Goondiwindi Regional Council encourages all members of the community to share ideas and interact on our Facebook page but advises end users that there are specific terms and conditions / protocols that must be followed in order to provide a positive experience for all.

These may be updated from time to time to address management, regulatory and/ or reputational issues.

GRC Facebook Page Extract

What we expect from you

We welcome your comments and do not discriminate against any views. We encourage you to discuss and share opinions with others and Council via our Facebook page.

In order to ensure our page is friendly and welcoming for all visitors, we do moderate where needed. We ask that when contributing your views to Goondiwindi Regional Council’s Facebook page, you ensure that you:

- *do not harass, abuse or threaten other visitors to the site or Council employees*
- *do not post comments that are likely to offend others, particularly in reference to an individual’s race, age, gender, sexuality, political leaning, religion, employment or disability*
- *do not use obscene or offensive language*
- *do not post defamatory comments*
- *do not post repeat comments continuously*
- *do not repeatedly post information which is factually inaccurate and may mislead others*
- *do not promote anything that may constitute spam, including, but not limited to, commercial interests, solicitations, advertisements, endorsements of any non-governmental agency or comments unrelated to the post*
- *do not reveal any personal or sensitive information about others on this page, including naming council officers*
- *protect your personal privacy by not including email addresses, phone numbers or home addresses on the public wall and also the privacy of others*

Any posts or comments that violate these terms will be deleted.

Any person who repeatedly violates these guidelines may be blocked from posting on the Goondiwindi Regional Council Facebook page.

Overall, we want everyone to feel safe and welcome on Goondiwindi Regional Council’s Facebook page. We welcome your comments any time and hope you enjoy spending time here. Be polite and enjoy the page.