RIPON CITY COUNCIL

Our Approach To Social Media

Information for The Public

Item	Detail
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1. WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

1.1. ‘Social media’ is a term commonly used for technology platforms, websites and online tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way. Its growing popularity has attracted the attention of individuals and organisations who want to improve engagement with friends, colleagues and customers.

2. WHY USE SOCIAL MEDIA?

2.1. Social media tools encourage participation and engagement and may build powerful communities or networks through the sharing of information, opinions, knowledge and interests.

2.2. Social media tools such as Facebook can provide an opportunity to reach audiences, such as young people, that the Council would otherwise miss if it relied solely on more traditional communication methods, such as the local press.

3. HOW DO WE USE SOCIAL MEDIA?

3.1. The primary purpose of the social media that the Council engages with is to facilitate communication between residents and others who live and work in or visit Ripon.

3.2. We will try to respond to as many replies or comments as we can, but this isn’t always possible. We recognise that the web is a 24 hour 7 day a week media, and your comments are welcome at any time. However given the need to manage our resources, we generally only monitor comments and postings during normal business hours.

3.3. If you have an urgent enquiry, please use the Contact us page on the City Council’s website www.riponcity.gov.uk

3.4. The social media that Ripon City Council uses as part of its communication approach is outlined an appendix held in the Council records. All other social media accounts used by the elected members and officers of Ripon City Council are therefore considered to be personal and as such any views outlined are personal and do not necessarily represent a formal view of Ripon City Council.

3.5. In addition social media can play an important part in supporting the Partnerships that Ripon City Council participates in. Therefore, the Chief Officer has discretion to agree to use social media on behalf of these identified partnerships to support the achievement of the Council’s aims and objectives. This includes allowing the delegation of this responsibility to other officers of the City Council with their prior agreement. Details of these accounts are held in the Council records.

4. HOW DO WE MANAGE OUR SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS?

4.1. Ripon City Council may choose to connect to others’ social media profiles to obtain relevant information and facilitate communication between interested parties. However, it is important to understand the Council’s approach.

Liking and following

4.2. Please don’t be offended if we don’t ‘Like’ or ‘Follow’ you on social media. This doesn’t mean we don’t like you or are not interested in what you have to say, it’s just that the numbers can get too high for us to manage.

4.3. We sometimes ‘Follow’ or ‘Like’ people or organisations which provide information that is relevant to our work as a local authority, for example central government accounts, local media, and our partners, or those whose information we can pass on for the benefit of local people.

4.4. Occasionally, we’ll also try and lend our support to local and national campaigns. There will also be times we’ll need to ‘Like’ or ‘Follow’ an account in order to take part in conversations.

4.5. Just because we ‘Like’ or ‘Follow’ someone, re-tweet or share their information, it doesn’t mean that we endorse them.

Sharing and re-tweeting

4.6. We try and ‘Share’ or ‘re-tweet’ information that we think will be of interest or use to everyone in Ripon; however, please don’t be offended if we don’t re-tweet something you want us to.

4.7. As a trusted organisation, any sharing of information could be seen as endorsement of a particular view, individual or organisation, and it’s important that we remain impartial and protect the council’s reputation.

Blocking and un-following

4.8. If we block your account, this will probably be because you’ve ‘Followed’ or ‘Liked’ the council purely to promote a product or service, or you’ve contravened the rules of a particular social media space (see Moderation).

4.9. If for some reason we ‘un-follow’ you, it might just be that we’re going through a sort out or simply cutting down on numbers: if you see that we’ve ‘un-followed’ you, please don’t take this a sign of personal rejection.

5. WHAT DO WE PROMISE TO PARTICIPANTS IN OUR SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS?

5.1. The Elected Members and Officers of Ripon City Council abide by the Council’s Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct applies to online activity in the same way that it does to other written or verbal communication. Elected members and Officers should comply with the general principles of the Code in what they publish and what they allow others to publish.

5.2. This means that participants in Ripon City Council’s social media networks can expected that the Elected Members and Officers will:

- Treat others with respect, and avoid personal attacks or being disrespectful, rude or making offensive comments
- Comply with equality laws taking care not to publish anything that might be considered sexist, racist, ageist, homophobic or anti-faith
- Don’t publish anything you have received in confidence
- Ensure you don’t bring the council, or your role, into disrepute

5.3. Councillors are expected to communicate politically, but there is a big difference between communicating on behalf of the council or as a private citizen. In using Social Media, Elected Members will make it obvious which persona they are using.

Pre-election period or 'Purdah'

5.4. In the six-week run up to an election - whether local, general, referendum or European - all councils have to be very careful not to do or say anything that could be seen in any way to support any political party or candidate. We will continue to publish important service announcements using social media but may have to remove responses if they are overtly party political.

6. WHAT DO WE EXPECT FROM PARTICIPANTS IN OUR SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS?

Moderation

6.1. Most online communities have their own rules and guidelines, which we will always follow.

6.2. Where possible, we will rely on the measures of protection and intervention which the social networking site already has in place, for example against illegal, harmful or offensive content, or by flagging comments or alerting them to any breaches of the site's terms and conditions.

Our Rules

6.3. We also have some of our own rules. We reserve the right to remove any contributions that break the rules of the relevant community, or any of the following guidelines:

- be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- don't post messages that are unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- don't swear;
- don't post content copied from elsewhere, for which you do not own the copyright;
- don't post the same message, or very similar messages, more than once (also called "spamming");
- don't publicise your, or anyone else's, personal information, such as contact details;
- don't advertise products or services;
- don't impersonate someone else.

Libel

6.4. Please take care not to make libellous statements. In law this means a statement that lowers the reputation of a person or organisation in the eyes of a reasonable person. By publishing such a statement we can both get into serious trouble. We will therefore take down any statement that could be deemed to be libellous.