

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'D'

Social Media Principles

It is part of East Herts Council's Communication Strategy to effectively engage in social media. We have both an opportunity and a responsibility to manage and protect the council's reputation online and to selectively participate and engage in the online conversations that mention us on a daily basis.

Our Communication Strategy encourages officers and councillors to participate appropriately in social media and has created an official presence on many social media platforms. These principles have been developed to empower officers and councillors to participate in online communities.

8 Expectations for PROFESSIONAL online activities Speaking 'on behalf of' East Herts Council

- **Attend training:** All employees who wish to represent East Herts Council online must complete the Social Media Certification Training prior to doing so.
- **Follow our performance, conduct and behaviour policies:** The Officers' Code of Conduct sets out the standards that all employees should maintain in the workplace, and this includes online work. Be respectful, how you act online affects the reputation of you, your colleagues and the Council.
- **Identify yourself as a representative of East Herts Council:** At the outset you must state your name and the service you are representing. It is never acceptable to use aliases.
- **Monitor your relevant social media channels:** Make sure that you know what is being discussed, so you can respond when needed.
- **Keep records:** Online conversations are often short-lived and instant and therefore it is vital that that we keep records of our interactions. Remember that online statements can be held to the same legal standards as traditional media communications.

- **If in doubt, do not post:** Online spokespeople must ensure that posts are accurate, not misleading and do not contain non-public information concerning East Herts. When in doubt, do not post; instead contact the Communications Team for further guidance.
- **Respect copyrights:** Always gain approval from, and give credit to, the owners of any content you publish online. For example; images, video, text, music and trademarks
- **Protect data:** Always 'Th!nk Privacy'

4 Expectations for PERSONAL online activities Speaking 'about' East Herts Council

- **Keep an eye out for compliments and criticism:** You are a vital asset for monitoring social media platforms. If you come across positive/ negative comments online about East Herts Council, that you consider important, then forward them to the Communications Team.
- **You are responsible for your actions:** When conversing online follow the Officer's Code of Conduct. Any action online which could potentially damage the reputation of East Herts Council will ultimately be your responsibility. Do not disclose information that is not publicly available. Engage, but use common sense.
- **Be conscious about mixing your personal and business lives:** Online, personal and business lives cross paths. Internal and external corporate contacts, as well as the East Herts community may have access to what you post, even if this was not your intention. Speaking about them in a negative, demeaning or offensive way is not acceptable.
- **Remember data protection guidelines!!!**

Reputation Management

There are particular rules of engagement for crisis response situations that must to be taken into consideration. For example, deleting a post or blocking a user may escalate the issue, rather than resolve it. If you become aware of a comment, post or content that is inappropriate or poses a risk to East Herts Council's

reputation please bring it to the attention of the Communications Team.

Social media is continuously evolving and therefore these principles will be updated alongside the annual review of the Communication Strategy.