

POLICY

CORP025 Social Media Management Policy



1 Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidance to Council employees involved in the delivery of social media relating to Council business and to encourage the active promotion of Hindmarsh Shire through the use of social media. This policy also aims to facilitate dynamic and interactive two-way communication - this can complement existing communication mechanisms and further improve information sharing and access as well as delivery of key services. This policy supports Council's Community Engagement Policy.

The objectives of this policy are to outline the requirements for compliance regulatory parameters when using social media to conduct Council business and detail the principles for effective social media use.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, agents and volunteers of Council who may use social media on behalf of the Council.

This policy applies to any social media, whether official, unofficial, or personal that purports to provide material about Council and its activities. This includes social media used by Community Asset Committees, Advisory Committees and Committees of Management.

This policy applies to digital spaces where people may comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content.

3 Definitions

Administrators	mean Hindmarsh Shire Council employees and volunteers authorised by the CEO or Social Media Manager to post on social media
Digital Space	means any online platform where people may interact with the author and/or others, including commenting, contributing, creating, forwarding, posting, uploading and/or sharing content.
CEO	means the Chief Executive Officer of Hindmarsh Shire Council
Council	means the Hindmarsh Shire Council and any of its members or committees or employees or Councillors.
Social Media	means the online technologies, platforms and practices that people use to share content, news, opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives.

Social Media Manager means the person appointed by the CEO to manage Council affiliated social media.

4 Principles

Council will use and develop social media to promote Council, the Shire, Council activities and assets in the local region.

Council will encourage local residents, businesses, clubs and organisations to positively promote the Shire, Council activities and other information relevant to the community through the use of social media. This Policy should be read in conjunction with Council's Guidelines for Promoting Businesses on Social Media.

Council has a duty of care to monitor social media to ensure that accurate and positive messages are being presented on Council accounts. Public comments may be deleted according to the [Moderation of Public Comments](#) clause.

When using social media to conduct Council business, all parties are expected to:

- Seek prior authorisation from **CEO** to establish a social media site/presence;
- Adhere to Council codes of conduct, policies and procedures;
- Behave with caution, courtesy, honesty and respect;
- Comply with relevant laws and regulations;
- Reinforce the integrity, reputation and values of Council; and
- Understand and comply with the terms and conditions of the social media being used.

5 Responsibilities

5.1 CEO

The CEO is responsible for delegating a Social Media Manager.

5.2 Social Media Manager

It is the responsibility of Council's social media manager to oversee social media accounts, the security of passwords and upkeep of these accounts. The social media manager, under direction of the CEO, has the power to grant access to other members of staff to administer groups on the platforms and to post content.

Only the approved Social Media Manager and administrators (including approved volunteers) can post and respond on behalf of Council.

The Social Media Manager is responsible for revoking access of administrators where any of the principles of this policy have been breached or at their discretion according to the requirements of Council.

5.3 Administrators

Administrators are responsible for posting and co-ordinating content across approved accounts according to the direction provided by, and under the supervision of, the Social Media Manager.

Administrators will ensure appropriate authorisation has been obtained before using social media including but not limited to uploading content and acting as a spokesperson on behalf of Council.

Council social media administrators generally monitor all accounts during business hours - 8:30am – 5:00pm Monday to Friday.

6 Disclosure, Privacy and Intellectual Property

Social media administrators should only discuss publicly available information. Confidential information, internal discussions or decisions of Council, employees or third parties should not be disclosed. This includes publishing confidential, personal or private information where there is sufficient detail for potential identification of Councillors, Council staff or third parties.

All posts, comments, messages and social media use should be sensitive to the privacy and entitlements of others. Permission for use should be sought from anyone who appears in any photographs, video or other footage before sharing these via any form of social media. If asked to remove materials do so as soon as practicable.

Permission should be sought from the creator or copyright owner to use or reproduce copyright material including applications, audio tracks (speeches, songs), footage (video), graphics (graphs, charts and logos), images, artwork, photographs, publications or music.

Permission should also be sought before publishing or uploading material in which the intellectual property rights, such as trademarks, are owned by a third party e.g. company logos. Permission should be sought from the website's owner wherever possible before linking to another site (including a social media application).

7 Enquiries, Complaints and Requests

Requests, comments or complaints received via social media that require 'actioning' (i.e. a request for a Council service or correspondence for a Councillor), should be forwarded to either Customer Service or to the appropriate Council Officer for action.

8 Moderation of Public Comments

Council actively seeks ideas, questions, complaints and feedback from the public. Council encourages open conversation and debate, but expect participants to behave in a respectful manner.

Council reserves the right to delete comments that are:

- knowingly false or mischievous complaints or statements about individuals, companies or the government;
- misleading, obscene, derogatory, off-topic, sexist, racist or spam;
- promotional or commercial in nature;
- unlawful or incite others to break the law;
- infringing any person or organisation's copyright or intellectual property rights
- defamatory or harassing of Council employees, volunteers or the participants in Council channels;
- information that may compromise the safety or security of the public;
- repetitive posts copied and pasted or duplicated by single or multiple users; or

- any other inappropriate content or comments as determined by Council.

Council reserves the right to turn comments off on any of its posts across Social Media platforms. In this instance, Council may include contact details for the community to direct their queries and questions to, for example, via email to info@hindmarsh.vic.gov.au or via phone to Hindmarsh Shire Council on 03 5391 4444.

9 Caretaker Periods

During caretaker periods, social media use must adhere to caretaker conventions. During caretaker periods ahead of local, state or federal elections, Council will not respond to any political comments and maintains the right to remove any message of a political nature. The Management of Council's social media, including social media run by Committees of Council, shall be as per the Election Period Policy, Election Period Certification Procedure, the *Local Government Act 2020* and other relevant legislation and regulations.

Administrator access during Caretaker Periods will be regulated by the Social Media Manager.

Appendix 1 contains the social media settings adjustment procedure to be followed prior to the caretaker period.

10 Social Media Disclaimer

The following disclaimer will be published on all Hindmarsh Shire Council managed social media platforms:

Hindmarsh Shire Council welcomes comments, however, will moderate comments in order to ensure our channels are friendly and welcoming for all visitors. Council reserves the right to hide or remove discriminatory, vulgar, abusive, defamatory, offensive and hurtful comments across its social media platforms. For more information or to view our Social Media Management Policy, please visit www.hindmarsh.vic.gov.au/social-media-guidelines.

11 Records Management


Under the *Public Records Act 1973*, Council has an obligation to keep records they have created, as well as public records. This obligation extends to records created through social media. Please see Hindmarsh Shire Council's Records Management Policy for further information.

12 References

Related Internal Documents	Legislation
Guidelines for Promoting Business on Social Media	<i>Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)</i> <i>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)</i>
Employee Code of Conduct	<i>Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)</i>
Records Management Policy	<i>Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)</i> <i>Local Government Act 1989 (Vic)</i>

Privacy Policy	<i>Local Government Act 2020</i>
Election Period Policy	<i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)</i>
Election Period Certification Procedure	<i>Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)</i>
	<i>Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)</i>

13 Document Control

Social Media Management Policy		Policy Category	OPERATIONAL
Version Number	1.1	Policy Status	Approved
Approved/Adopted By	Acting CEO	Approved/Adopted on:	10 November 2023
Approver Signature			
Responsible Officer	DCCS	Review Date	10 November 2026
Version History	Date	Version	Description
	May 2023	1.0	New Policy
	November 2023	1.1	Added Employee Agreement

Appendix 1 Social Media Settings Management Procedure – Caretaker Periods

Facebook

Applicable to all Facebook pages affiliated with Hindmarsh Shire Council

1. Publish a post explaining the expectations and requirements for this period, providing alternative contact methods for enquiries, requests and complaints. The post should read as follows;

From Time Day Date Month Year Hindmarsh Shire Council will enter into Election Period prior to the Year (Local Government) Council election on Date Month Year. The Local Government Act 2020 provides direction around what kind of information can be published by Council or using Council resources during the Election Period. These resources include social media. In order to avoid any potential breaches of the Act, Council and Council associated committees will not be posting to social media during this period, unless material is authorised by the CEO as not likely to influence the electoral outcome. All comments on Council social media posts will be closely moderated during the Election Period. In practice this will mean that all comments will be hidden to ensure adherence to the Act. During this time you will still be able to send us a direct message or contact us via phone on 03 5391 4444, or by email directly to info@hindmarsh.vic.gov.au.

2. Disable all commenting and posting throughout the caretaker period through altering the following settings –

General Settings

- **Visitor Posts:** Disable posts by other people on the page
- **Post and story sharing:** Disable sharing to stories
- **Tagging ability:** Don't allow
- **Others tagging this page:** Don't allow

Page Moderation

Amend the list of words that will be blocked when used. Keep the existing list of profanities, but also add “vote”, “candidate”, “election”, and the names of all candidates. The following generic words can be used to limit the number of comments that can be added to posts;

in	but	do	when
is	not	up	will
you	all	down	if
that	where	about	and
he	were	so	how
she	we're	would	hey
was	why	news	hi
for	who	fantastic	to

are	your	great	be
with	you're	thanks	the
his	my	never	council
hers	then	rain	elections
they	tell	drain	on
at	there	block	it
this	they're	blocked	of
have	their	fire	yes
from	use	grass	no
or	an	hazard	what
had	each	snake	who
by	which		as

Set the profanity filter to “**strong.**”

3. All posts must be approved by the CEO with a statement from the CEO on the post itself that reads as follows;

“I certify that this material is suitable for printing, publishing or distribution on behalf of Hindmarsh Shire Council.

Greg Wood

Chief Executive Officer”

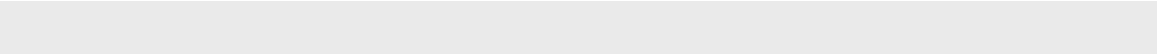
4. After the completion of the caretaker period, add page roles for each Council affiliated page back in and adjust settings to original configuration.

Instagram

Applicable to all Instagram pages affiliated with Hindmarsh Shire Council.

1. Publish a post as per point 1 in the above section.
2. Comments must be disabled and moderated for Instagram posts in the following ways -
 - a. Comments on posts during the caretaker period must be switched off.
 - b. Using Instagram settings features, the key words listed in point 2 above should be added to the blocked words filter.

Appendix 2 Agreement – Delegated and Approved Users

I, 
understand and accept my responsibilities under the Social Media Management Policy, the
Employee Code of Conduct (employees only) and the approved list of delegated users.


Signature


Date