

COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

DIVISION	BUSINESS UNIT	RESPONSIBILITY AREA
Executive Services	Information Technology	Internet

OBJECTIVE:

This policy establishes protocols for the Shire of Plantagenet's official communications with its public to ensure the Shire of Plantagenet is professionally and accurately represented, and to maximise a positive public perception of the Shire.

To ensure that all the Shire's social media interactions are preserved and available as corporate knowledge in accordance with the *State Records Act 2000*.

POLICY:

1.0 Scope

1.1. This policy applies to:

- a) Communications initiated or responded to by the Shire of Plantagenet with the public; and
- b) Elected Members when making comment in either their role as a Councillor or in a personal capacity.

2.0 Official Communications

2.1. The purposes of the Shire of Plantagenet's official communications include:

- a) Sharing information required by law to be publicly available.
- b) Sharing information that is of interest and benefit to the community.
- c) Promoting Shire of Plantagenet events and services.
- d) Promoting public notices and community consultation/engagement opportunities.
- e) Answering questions and responding to requests for information relevant to the role of the Shire of Plantagenet.
- f) Receiving and responding to community feedback, ideas, comments, compliments and complaints.

2.2 The Shire of Plantagenet's official communications will be consistent with relevant legislation, policies, standards and the positions adopted by the Council, where applicable. Our communications will always be respectful and professional.

2.3 The Shire of Plantagenet will use a combination of different communication modes to suit the type of information to be communicated and the requirements of the community or specific audience, including:

- a) Website.
 - b) Advertising and promotional materials.
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- c) Media releases.
- d) Public Electronic Notice Board.
- e) Social media.
- f) Community newsletters, letter drops and other modes of communications at the discretion of the CEO.

3.0 Speaking on behalf of the Shire of Plantagenet

- 3.1 The Shire President is the official spokesperson for the Shire of Plantagenet and may represent the Shire in official communications, including speeches, comment, print, electronic and social media. (*s.2.8 (1) (d) of the Local Government Act 1995*).
- 3.2 Where the Shire President is unavailable, the Deputy Shire President may act as the spokesperson. (*s.2.9 and s.5.34 of the Local Government Act 1995*).
- 3.3 The CEO may speak on behalf of the Shire of Plantagenet, where authorised to do so by the Shire President. (*s.5.41 (f) of the Local Government Act 1995*).
- 3.4 The provisions of the *Local Government Act 1995* essentially direct that only the Shire President, or the CEO if authorised, may speak on behalf of the Local Government.

4.0 Responding to Media Enquiries

- 4.1 All enquiries from the media for an official Shire of Plantagenet comment, whether made to an individual Elected Member or employee, must be directed to the Shire President, CEO or a person authorised by the Shire President or CEO. Information will be coordinated to support the Shire President or CEO (where authorised) to make an official response on behalf of the Shire of Plantagenet.

5.0 Website

- 5.1 The Shire of Plantagenet will maintain an official website, as our public's online resource to access the Shire's official communications and publicly available information.

6.0 Social Media

- 6.1 The Shire of Plantagenet uses social media to facilitate interactive information sharing and to provide responsive feedback to our public. The use of social media does not replace traditional forms of communication but provides another avenue to engage the community.
 - 6.2 Social media will not, however, be used by the Shire of Plantagenet to communicate or respond to matters that are complex or relate to a person's or entity's private affairs.
 - 6.3 The Shire of Plantagenet will ensure that social media activities are adequately resourced by staff to allow for content development, monitoring, interpreting the volume and content of messages, and responding as required. This includes using a social media management platform to ensure a high standard of content creation and delivery.
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- 6.4 Access to social media platforms by employees, during work time, will only be for the purposes of managing the Shire of Plantagenet accounts. Access to personal accounts is not permitted.
 - 6.5 The Shire of Plantagenet will maintain social media accounts approved by the CEO.
 - 6.6 All Shire of Plantagenet social media pages will be branded using the Shire of Plantagenet logo, slogan, symbol, and/or colour combination ensuring a clearly identifiable and consistent presentation of the Shire brand.
 - 6.7 The Shire of Plantagenet may also post and contribute to social media hosted by others, so as to ensure that the Shire of Plantagenet strategic objectives are appropriately represented and promoted.
 - 6.8 The Shire of Plantagenet actively seeks ideas, questions and feedback from our community. However, we expect participants to behave in a respectful manner. The Shire of Plantagenet will moderate its social media accounts to address and where necessary delete content which is deemed as:
 - a) Offensive, abusive, defamatory, objectionable, inaccurate, false or misleading.
 - b) Promotional, soliciting or commercial in nature.
 - c) Unlawful or incites others to break the law.
 - d) Information which may compromise individual or community safety or security.
 - e) Repetitive material copied and pasted or duplicated.
 - f) Content that promotes or opposes any person campaigning for election to the Council, appointment to official office, or any ballot.
 - g) Content that violates intellectual property rights or the legal ownership of interests or another party.
 - h) Any other inappropriate content or comments at the discretion of the Shire of Plantagenet.
 - 6.9 An opportunity exists to take part in social media conversations about the Plantagenet area and the Shire of Plantagenet, and will help us:
 - a) Respond faster to the public's concerns.
 - b) Be more accessible when people want to be heard.
 - c) See what matters most to our public.
 - d) Reduce the risk and impact of negative comments and bad publicity.
 - 6.10 Where a third party contributor to a Shire of Plantagenet social media page is identified as posting content which is deleted in accordance with the above, the Shire of Plantagenet may at its complete discretion block that contributor for a specified period of time or permanently.
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7.0 Content

- 7.1 When using social media platforms, Elected Members and Shire employees will:
- a) Abide by the Code of Conduct Policy OP/HRP/2 and Customer Service Charter.
 - b) Adhere to Shire policies and procedures.
 - c) Uphold the values of the Shire of Plantagenet.
 - d) Act in a timely and appropriate manner.
 - e) Be transparent, accurate, professional, fair, respectful, responsible, aware of confidentiality and privacy, and be careful at all times.
 - f) Ensure that all relevant legislation has been complied with.
 - g) Avoid political bias.
 - h) Take steps to avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest.
- 7.2 Content uploaded to social media must only disclose information which is classified as suitable for the public domain. Information posted must be accurate and not misleading in any way. When developing or posting content, staff must not:
- a) Use abusive, profane or sexually explicit language.
 - b) Undertake commercial solicitations or transactions.
 - c) Use copyright or ownership protected materials without appropriate approvals.
 - d) Be discriminatory, defamatory, or encourage law breaking behaviour.
 - e) Compromise the Council, its employees, or safety.
 - f) Reference clients, partners or suppliers without approval.
 - g) Promote or create spam.
 - h) Air personal campaigns.
- 7.3 Content which is subject to copyright (applications, audio, video, graphics, images, photographs, publications) will not be used unless prior written consent is obtained from the creator or copyright owner and the original author or source of the material is acknowledged. Employees will be diligent in their consideration of brand, copyright, fair use and trademarks.

8.0 Record Keeping and Freedom of Information

- 8.1 Official communications undertaken on behalf of the Shire of Plantagenet, including on the Shire's social media accounts and third party social media accounts must be created and retained as local government records in accordance with the Shire's Record Keeping Plan and the *State Records Act 2000*. These records are also subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

9.0 Personal Communications

- 9.1 Personal communications and statements made privately in conversation, written, recorded, emailed or posted in personal social media have the
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potential to be made public, whether it was intended to be made public or not.

Therefore, on the basis that personal or private communications may be shared or become public at some point in the future, Elected Members must ensure that their personal or private communications do not breach the requirements of this policy, the Code of Conduct, and the *Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007*.

10.0 Elected Member Statements on Shire of Plantagenet Matters

- 10.1 Any public statement made by an Elected Member, whether made in a personal capacity or in their Local Government representative capacity, must:
- a) Clearly state that the comment or content is a personal view only, which does not necessarily represent the views of the Shire of Plantagenet.
 - b) Be made with reasonable care and diligence.
 - c) Be lawful, including avoiding contravention of copyright, defamation, discrimination or harassment laws.
 - d) Not contain factually incorrect statements.
 - e) Avoid damage to the reputation of the local government.
 - f) Not reflect adversely on a decision of the Council.
 - g) Not reflect adversely on the character or actions of another Elected Member or employee.
 - h) Maintain a respectful and positive tone and not use offensive or objectionable expressions in reference to any Elected Member, employee or community member.
- 10.2 It is respectful and courteous to the office of Shire President to refrain from commenting publicly, particularly on recent decisions or contemporary issues, until such time as the Shire President has had an opportunity to speak on behalf of the Shire of Plantagenet.
- 10.3 Communications by Elected Members, whether undertaken in an authorised official capacity or as a personal communication, must not:
- a) Bring the Shire of Plantagenet into disrepute.
 - b) Compromise the person's effectiveness in their role with the Shire of Plantagenet.
 - c) Imply the Shire's endorsement of personal views.
 - d) Disclose, without authorisation, confidential information including matters discussed in Council workshops.
- 10.4 Social media accounts or unsecured website forums must not be used to transact meetings which relate to the official business of the Shire of Plantagenet.
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- 10.5 Elected Member communications must comply with the Code of Conduct and the Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007.
- 10.6 An Elected Member who is approached by the media for a personal statement may request the assistance of the CEO.
- 10.7 Comments which become public, and which breach this policy, the Code of Conduct, or the *Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007*, may constitute a serious breach of the *Local Government Act 1995* and may be referred for investigation.

ADOPTED: 9 OCTOBER 2018

LAST REVIEWED: 26 OCTOBER 2021
