

POLICY

Policy Name	Media, Communications and Social Media Policy
Policy Category	Governance
Department / Officer	Governance / Chief Executive Officer
Date Adopted	27 March 2023
Date/s Reviewed	
Review Frequency	Three years
Strategic Plan Reference	Aspiration 6 – We are a financially sustainable and well-governed organisation

Attachments

1. Purpose

This policy establishes Council's commitment to effectively engage with the media, wider community and stakeholders in a professional, timely and positive manner. It also nominates the official spokesperson(s) for the City of Victor Harbor for all forms of response and public comment. This policy also recognises the opportunities that social media provides for dynamic and interactive communication which can complement traditional communication methods.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all official engagements and communications provided by employees, Council Members, volunteers, agents and contractors on behalf of the City of Victor Harbor with the public (using traditional media and social media). This policy also applies to public use of official City of Victor Harbor social media platforms.

This policy does not cover public consultation or general Council correspondence, or the use of social media in a personal capacity where no reference is made to Council-related matters.

3. Policy Statement (Summary)

Council requires a consistent and professional corporate approach when engaging in two-way connections with the media and the community, whether through traditional or social media.

4. Legislation and Compliance

Relevant legislation includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)
- Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 (SA)
- Defamation Act 2005 (SA)
- Fair Trading Act 1987 (SA)
- Fair Work Act 1994 (SA)
- Freedom of Information Act 1991 (SA)
- Local Government Act 1999 (SA)
- Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 (SA)
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
- Spam Act 2003 (Cth)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- State Records Act 1997 (SA)
- Civil Liability Act 1936 (SA)

5. Definitions

Traditional media – Includes newspapers, radio, television, publications, letters, press releases etc.

Social media – Platforms and applications that enable users to create and share content to participate in social networking, allowing the community to comment, provide feedback and engage online. Social media includes the following: Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, blogs and more.

Digital platforms – Includes social media, email, eNewsletter/EDMs, text messaging, websites, videos etc.

Moderation – is the editing or removal of content posted to a social media site. For example, to remove offensive materials.

Post-moderation of content – Allows all user-submitted content to appear online automatically, where it will then be reviewed and removed or edited at a later time if necessary.

Pre-moderation of content – Allows for the review and approval of all user-submitted content before it appears online.

Staff – any person carrying out duties or performing tasks for and on behalf of the City of Victor Harbor whether they are paid or unpaid, including employees, contractors, consultants, volunteers, or students that are involved with the City of Victor Harbor.

6. Policy Content

6.1 Media, Communications and Social Media Principles

Council's use of traditional and digital platforms aims to:

- inform the community about the policies, service levels, programs, services and initiatives of the City of Victor Harbor in line with aspirations within the Community Plan.
- ensure the City of Victor Harbor is visible, accessible and accountable to the community and key stakeholders.
- drive community participation and engagement with the programs, activities and events delivered or supported by the City of Victor Harbor.
- increase and encourage two-way communication between the community and the City of Victor Harbor to enhance the council's value perception.

6.2 Using Council Communication Platforms

The Council's communications and engagement platforms, including traditional and digital methods, may be used in a variety of ways to connect and share information with the City of Victor Harbor community. Both traditional and digital platforms may provide details and specific information, however all information will lead back to Council's main source of information – the City of Victor Harbor corporate website. Opportunities to be involved in decision making relating to Council projects and services will be shared across these platforms, with formal decision-making processes not conducted across these platforms.

The role of the Communications Team is to provide advice on appropriate communications and engagement platforms that will be used for Council purposes with oversight of all content.

6.3 Response to Traditional Media (Spokespersons)

The Mayor and Chief Executive Officer are nominated as the official spokespersons of the Council for traditional media (when speaking with journalists from print and broadcast media outlets) and have the authority to make comments to the media on behalf of Council. Only the official spokespersons, or officers authorised by the Chief Executive Officer for specific situations, may give any information or speak to the media on behalf of Council.

Where appropriate or expedient for a specific issue, the Mayor may delegate their responsibility as principal spokesperson for the Council to the Deputy Mayor or another Council Member.

Media enquiries are generally received by the Communications Team who coordinate and determine the appropriate method of response. Council has a Communications Team with professional staff who can respond to media enquiries in consultation with the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer (or Chief Executive Officer's delegate/s).

If the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer is contacted directly by the media, they have the authority to respond directly.

When Council Members speak to the media, they speak as individual Councillors and not on behalf of the City of Victor Harbor and must make this clear in their response. When the Mayor is not speaking on behalf of Council they must also make it clear that they are speaking as an individual. Council Members should direct all media inquiries to the Communications Team.

Council staff shall communicate with the media only if authorised by the Chief Executive Officer and may not make any personal comment on any issues, via traditional or digital platforms.

6.4 Response to Social Media (Spokespersons)

Only the official spokespersons, or staff authorised by the Chief Executive Officer (for specific situations), may provide information via Council's official digital and social media channels.

6.5 Moderation and Monitoring

Moderation applies to social media only. The City of Victor Harbor monitors and moderates its social media pages to remove anything defamatory, or may turn off commenting in certain circumstances. The Council's terms of use state how we expect users to engage with our social media pages and this is available at www.victor.sa.gov.au.

Council's social media channels should be regularly monitored and maintained to ensure appropriate use. This includes removing inappropriate content in a timely manner and keeping formal records of social media activity in line with Council's Records Management Policy.

6.6 Use of Social Media

Any personal use of digital communications is at the individual community member, staff member or Council Member's discretion. However, it is important that individuals are aware and responsible for the implications of participating where they reference Council, their relationship with Council or its brands, or interact with a Council social media channel.

Council Members – Council Members should use social media in accordance with the Behavioural Standards for Council Members, All Council Member social media accounts should have a prominent statement that clearly identifies they are not speaking on behalf of Council. In expressing individual views, Council Members must do so in a way that does not undermine the community's trust or confidence in Council and maintains respectful relationships with fellow Council Members and staff. For Council Members, breaching this policy may result in a Behavioural Standards complaint.

Council Staff – Council staff using private social media channels to comment on Council related matters should do so in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Employees. Comments should be clearly identified as their own opinions, be accurate and factual, and not disparage Council, Council Members, employees, volunteers or contactors etc.

Any staff found breaching this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, performance management and/or review. Serious breaches may result in suspension or termination of employment or association in accordance with Council policies. Any content that breaches the policy guidelines will be recorded and kept on personnel records.

All Participants – When participating in open communications via traditional or digital platforms, participants should behave with courtesy, honesty and respect. ‘House rules’ will be shared with all those who engage in any City of Victor Harbor social media platform.

The City of Victor Harbor has the discretion to turn-off commenting on its social media channels. The Council will remove any content that falls into the following categories:

- Offensive, abusive or violent language
- Hateful or discriminatory comments
- Links or comments containing sexually explicit content material
- Violations of copyright or intellectual property rights
- Spam, link baiting or files containing viruses that could damage the operation of other people’s computers or mobile devices
- Attacks on specific groups or any comments meant to harass, threaten or abuse an individual
- Commercial or personal solicitations, including crowdfunding campaigns
- Trolling posts or deliberately disruptive conversations
- Inaccurate or misleading statements about the City of Victor Harbor, its staff and Council Members

Anyone who chooses to repeatedly break the house rules will be removed from Council platforms.

All social media channels are a public forum and information shared should be intended for the general public. Participation is at your own risk, and you take personal responsibility for your comments, your username and any information provided.

6.7 Complaints

All complaints and grievances about the City of Victor Harbor and its services should be formally reported to 8551 0500 or emailed to localgov@victor.sa.gov.au. Please refer to the Council’s Complaints Handling Policy for further information.

7. Risk Management

This policy will assist Council to mitigate risks associated with potential public relations, governance and legislative compliance matters.

8. Implementation/Delegations

The Chief Executive Officer is the delegated authority to implement this policy.

9. Related Documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Behavioural Standards for Council Members
- Code of Conduct for Employees
- Records Management Policy
- Acceptable use policies for email, internet, digital equipment and electronic communications
- Privacy Policy
- Public Consultation Policy
- Caretaker Policy

10. Availability of Policy

This policy is available on Council's website at www.victor.sa.gov.au. It may also be inspected or purchased at the Principal Office of the Council at 1 Bay Road, Victor Harbor.