

THEEWATERSKLOOF MUNICIPALITY



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Approved by Council

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to provide a regulatory framework guiding the use of the Municipality's social media accounts to engage and interact with its residents and the public at large. The policy will inform the strategy to be implemented for the Theewaterskloof Municipality to maintain a social media presence and mechanisms aimed at ensuring the image of the municipality is protected and its content remains relevant.

1.1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 The advancement of technology has provided a virtual platform for governments to directly engage its citizens.
- 1.1.2 Social media is one of the most popular communication mediums and it is thus critical for Theewaterskloof Municipality to join this medium.
- 1.1.3 In adopting social media as a form of communication, the municipality is able to better understand, respond to and attract the attention of targeted audiences.
- 1.1.4 The municipality is committed to openness and transparency, and through social media be able to showcase this and, in the process, engage communities directly whilst raising the profile of the municipality.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

- 1.2.1 To inform about and improve service delivery.
- 1.2.2 To disseminate information timeously and correct misinformation.
- 1.2.3 To strengthen relations with the public, business and other organs of state.
- 1.2.4 To create a cost-effective communications method aimed at promoting good relationships through a two-way dialogue.

1.3 SCOPE

- 1.3.1 This policy covers all aspects of social media relating to the municipality's use thereof, as well as the values, responsibilities, content guidelines, employee interactions, citizen conduct and brand compliance. These are all aspects that have to be adhered to and it is the scope of this policy to define exactly what is expected from each of these key areas.
- 1.3.2 This policy applies to all employees, contractors and councillors of the Theewaterskloof Municipality.

2. SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS MANAGEMENT

- 2.1 The Communications Department will be responsible for content management on the social media accounts of the municipality and ensuring that the messaging is consistent and in no way confusing or able to be misinterpreted.
- 2.2 Internal departments must submit relevant and updated content to the Communications Department to be posted on the social media accounts.

- 2.3 The Communications Department will be responsible for monitoring and reporting of; and is expected to respond to all comments, positive or negative, on the various social media platforms.
- 2.4 The Communications Department is the custodian of this policy and is responsible for enforcing its provisions and reviewing of the policy when necessary.

3. CONTENT: RULES AND REGULATIONS

- 3.1 The Communications Department will designate an official/s who will be responsible for the overall management of the social media accounts.
- 3.2 The designated official/s must ensure professional content that is engaging and informative is posted; and that accurate information is posted that is both relevant and in keeping with municipal policies and protocols; and also credit the copyright of owners when their content will be used for municipal content.
- 3.3 The designated official/s shall not post information that is sensitive or confidential. This includes personal information, home addresses and telephone numbers, or any information generally not available to the public.
- 3.4 The content posted on the municipal social media platforms must be posted timeously and in line with the relevant legislation and policies. All stakeholders are encouraged to share their opinions in a respectful manner.
- 3.5 Negative comments and criticism are to be expected; however, this also presents an opportunity to the municipality to engage residents and correct misinformation. The professional judgement of the designated official/s should be used to manage the engagement and not to allow it to become a dialogue.
- 3.6 The municipal website, www.twk.gov.za, remains the primary online source of information. The social media accounts will be used to complement the website and ensure a greater audience is reached.
- 3.7 The success of the social media accounts will be the consistency of response and dissemination of information. It is therefore critical for internal departments to speedily respond to queries directed to them by the Communications Department.
- 3.8 The designated official/s must at all times post and engage in a professional manner on behalf of the municipality and continuously monitor and expeditiously correct inaccurate or incorrect information.
- 3.9 Theewaterskloof Municipality is politically neutral. However official statements made by political office bearers can be posted on the municipal social media accounts but may not be of a party-political nature.
- 3.10 All comments containing the following shall be removed from the municipal social media accounts by the Communication Department in conjunction with the Legal Department:
 - i Profane language and content
 - ii Content that promotes discrimination on the basis of race, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, natural origin, physical or mental disability and sexual orientation.
 - iii Sexual content or links to sexual content
 - iv Content related to non-municipal related sales, advertising or promotions (commercial advertising)

4. CONTENT: DON'Ts

No employee or councillor of the municipality is permitted to share the following:

- 4.1 Anything that is harassing, threatening, obscene, pornographic, indecent, lewd, suggestive or otherwise objectionable.
- 4.2 Any content that infringes on the privacy of others and criticises individual community members by name.
- 4.3 Any content that is untrue, unlawful, defamatory, racist, sexist, homophobic or insulting.
- 4.4 Any content that is the property of someone else, without prior permission obtained to use it.
- 4.5 These rules will also apply to members of the public, if any comment of a member of the public contravenes these rules, it can be deleted.
- 4.6 Comments that are critical of the municipality or its officials, provided that they do not contravene any of the above rules, will be allowed to stand. Accusations will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.
- 4.7 All content must credit the copyright owner where applicable.

5. USE OF DEVICES IN COUNCIL MEETINGS

- 5.1 Council meetings are held to conduct council business and the public or representatives of the media have a right to be present. On occasion, Council may decide to hold an in a committee meeting to deal with subject matters requiring confidentiality. At in-committee meetings, neither the public nor the media is permitted, and there is no broadcasting of any kind.
- 5.2 Mobile devices with internet access and cameras will, therefore, be capable of sharing information publicly, in real time.
- 5.3 Media or members of the public will not be prevented from tweeting, updating, photographing proceedings or taking video footage.

6. SOCIAL MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT

6.1 For Municipal Employees

- 6.1.1 Employees of the municipality always remain ambassadors of the values of the municipality and whatever employees say or do on social media will have implications for the reputation of the municipality. It is crucial that employees exercise caution and act with professionalism and integrity when using social media. For example, employees may not comment negatively on social media about anything associated with Theewaterskloof Municipality.
- 6.1.2 The responsibilities and obligations imposed on employees and contractors of the municipality by their contracts of employment remain in force, whether they use a private account or access social media after workhours. Employees who contravene the terms set out in this policy can be subjected to disciplinary processes.

6.2 For Councillors

6.2.1 Everything Councillors do and say on social media reflects on the municipality and its reputation. In conducting themselves on social media, it is important that Councillors use sound judgment and common sense, act with professionalism and integrity, and adhere to the Municipality's values.

6.2.2 Councillors should restrict party political messages and campaign to their personal pages. The Municipality will not share or endorse any political content on any of its social media platforms at any time.

7. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES

7.1 The municipality must ensure that persons designated to manage its social media accounts are equipped with the necessary skills and equipment, including budgetary provision to do so remotely, before access is granted to these accounts.

8. PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER AT ALL TIMES

8.1 Person/s administering the official social media accounts of the municipality will be responsible for posting municipal content which should always be relevant to the community and not political.

8.2 Municipal employees engaging on the municipality's social media account must at all times adhere to the Code of Conduct and remember they do so as third-party visitors and are responsible for their own comments.

8.3 Municipal employees are prohibited from using their work email accounts when registering their private social media accounts.

8.4 Nothing is private on social media platforms. If individual staff members share something on any social media platform, even their own, they cannot claim that their privacy has been violated.

8.5 Employees should keep their tonality professional, while not losing the personal touch.

8.6 Content to be shared is about events, departmental collaborations, awareness campaigns, links on stories, vacancies, tenders, etc. to direct traffic to the Theewaterskloof Municipality Website.

8.7 Other types of posts to share will include community information, profiling a local business (provided that you are not seen to be biased), celebrating a local achievement and community-based campaigning (where the municipality is being seen to support them)

9. MISBEHAVIOUR

9.1 Any action or behaviour by councillors or employees, which is in conflict with this Policy, will be deemed as misbehaviour of the Code of Conduct of councillor or employees, respectively.