



LLANSTEFFAN AND LLANYBRI COMMUNITY COUNCIL

PRESS/MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Community Clerk and Proper Officer of the Council

- **Responses to the press relating to matters discussed by the Community Council shall be dealt with in the first instance by the Clerk.**
- The Community Council Chair, and in their absence the Vice-Chair, are also authorised to give the views of the Council to the press on any non-confidential subject discussed by Council if the Clerk should be absent.
- Whenever possible any information given to the press shall be given in writing so as not to leave interpretation open to misunderstanding and misreporting. At no time shall the personal views of either members or officer of the Council be given to the press in a way which could be interpreted as a view of the Council as a whole.
- The Clerk is neither expected nor authorised to speculate on matters that have not been considered by the Council.

Members of Llansteffan and Llanybri Community Council

Councillors should be aware that case law states that the role of Councillor overrides the rights to act as an individual. This means that Councillors should be careful about expressing individual views to the press or media, whether or not they relate to matters of Council business, as it be misinterpreted as a council position. Councillors also have an obligation to respect Council policy, once made, and should not seek to undermine a decision through the press or media.

Dealing with the Press

When dealing with the Press verbally, members and the officer should be aware of the following:

- Be calm
- Be informed and certain of all your facts
- Ensure that when making comments on behalf of the Community Council that you are aware what Council Policy is and that your comments reflect that policy.
- Ensure that your comments and views will not bring the Council, its Councillors or its staff into disrepute and ensure that comments are neither libelous nor slanderous.

Meetings of Council and Committees

Copies of Agendas, Minutes and Reports sent to Members for meetings of the Council or its Committees will be available to the Press and Media.

Facilities can be provided at meetings for the Press to take notes of the proceedings.

As provided in the Council's Standing Orders both the Press and Public may be excluded from a meeting whilst certain confidential matters (as provided for in the relevant legislation) are under discussion.

Press Releases

All press releases made on behalf of the Community Council will be prepared or overseen by the Clerk following any meetings of Council or Committees. The Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, is also authorised to publish press releases on any urgent matters where there is insufficient time for a council meeting.

The overriding principle of this policy is that all elements of the Press and Media will be treated equally.

Social Media

This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, X, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, Wikipedia, all other social networking sites, and all other internet postings, including blogs.

It applies to the use of social media for both the employee and members work and personal purposes, whether during work hours or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the council IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members and staff. This policy outlines the standards the Council requires the Clerk and elected members to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which use of social media will be monitored and the action that will be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.

Online and social media used by the Council should be used primarily for the following purposes:

- To share information relating to the official business of the council, e.g. posting dates of meetings, minutes and agendas;
- To advertise events and activities of potential interest to those who live in, work in, or visit the community;
- To promote newsworthy stories of potential interest;
- To alert the public to vacancies on the council;
- To support local individuals or community groups by sharing information that may be of benefit or interest;
- To announce new information that may be of relevance in relation to the work of the council;
- To function as an alternative platform for residents to express their views or queries to the clerk or councillors, although this will not be treated as being in an official capacity.

Rules for Use of Social Media

- Do not upload, post or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.
- Any elected member who feels that they have been harassed or bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform the

Clerk/Chair.

- Never disclose confidential information.
- Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.
- Do not escalate heated discussions, try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.
- Do not discuss colleagues without their prior approval.
- It is acceptable to make political points or canvass votes via your own personal social media accounts, but this is not permissible if you are commenting on behalf of the Council.
- Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact details.

Monitoring Use of Social Media Websites

The Clerk and elected members should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for Council purposes) may be monitored. Where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken against the Clerk under LLCC Disciplinary Procedure and Councillors under the Code of Conduct.

Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against the person uploading to a social media site and the Council.

Where evidence of misuse is found, the Council may undertake a more detailed investigation involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses involved in the investigation. If necessary, such information may be handed to the Police in connection with a criminal investigation.

If a member is made aware of any use of social media by the Clerk or elected members in breach of this policy please report it to the Clerk or Chair as appropriate.

Facebook

The Council Facebook profile intends to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within the community and promote the community positively. Communication from the Council will meet the following criteria:

- Be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libelous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- Not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which LLCC do not own the copyright, unless cascading information lawfully obtained from sources such as the County Council and other bodies;
- Not contain any personal information without prior permission;
- As official Council business it will be moderated by either the Chair/Vice Chair of the Council or the Clerk to the Council;

- Social media will not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

The Facebook profile will not invite comment and is purely for the dissemination of useful community information. However, if any member of the public wishes to contact the Community Council then they are free to do so by emailing the Clerk directly (llansteffanandllanybri@gmail.com) or sending a message via Facebook.

Email

The Clerk works part time (10 hours) and will aim to reply to all email as soon as possible. An 'out of office' message will be used when appropriate. The Clerk is responsible for dealing with emails received and passing on any relevant mail to members or external agencies for information and/or action. All communications on behalf of the Community Council will come from the Clerk and communications from Cty Cllrs, will be copied to the Clerk (if relevant).

Individual Councillors are at liberty to communicate directly with members of the community in regard to ascertaining opinions and discussing projects. Communications regarding official Council business must be copied to the Clerk. Any emails copied to the Clerk become official communications and will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act. These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

Members should not forward personal information on to other people or groups outside of the Council, this includes names, addresses, email, IP addresses and cookie identifiers.

SMS and MMS (E.g. Texting, WhatsApp)

Members and the Clerk may use SMS/MMS as a convenient way to communicate at times. All are reminded that this policy also applies to such messages.

Video Conferencing (E.g. ZOOM)

This policy also applies to the use of video conferencing (e.g., Zoom, Teams etc.).

Monitoring

The contents of the Council IT resources and communications systems are Council property. Therefore, the Clerk should have no expectation of privacy in any message, files, data, document, telephone conversation, social media post conversation or message, or any other kind of information or communications transmitted to, received or printed from, stored or recorded on council IT and communications systems.