



## **Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council**

### **Social Media and Electronic Communication Policy**

The use of digital and social media and electronic communication enables the Council to interact in a way that improves communications both within the Council and between the Council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

The Council has a website, a Facebook page and Instagram profile, and uses email to communicate. The Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time the Council may add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. This Policy will be kept under regular review to reflect any new arrangements.

The Council Facebook and Instagram pages intend to provide information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our communities and promote our community positively.

#### **Social Media communications from the Council will meet the following criteria:**

- Be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- Not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere which we do not have permission to share
- Not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details
- Be moderated by the officers of the Council
- Social media will-not be used for the dissemination of any political advertising.

#### **All Communications**

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Council pages are productive, respectful and consistent with the Council's aims and objectives, the following guidelines should be observed:

- Be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarly, threats or abusive language will not be tolerated.
- Differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on

© Copyright 2025

Adapted from the SLCC model Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy

SLCC retains copyright

anyone, including the Council, members or staff, will not be permitted.

- Share freely and be generous with official Council posts but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.
- Stay on topic.
- Refrain from using the Council's pages for commercial purposes or to advertise, market or sell products.

The website and other outlets are not monitored 24/7 and we will not always be able to reply individually to all messages or comments received. However, we will endeavour to ensure that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are passed to the relevant people or authorities. Please do not include personal/private information in your social media posts to us.

Sending a message/post via Facebook or Instagram will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and we will not be obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through these channels. Instead, please make direct contact with the Council via email:

[clerk@abertilleryandllanhilleth-wcc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@abertilleryandllanhilleth-wcc.gov.uk)

We retain the right to remove comments or content that includes:

- Obscene or racist content
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language
- Potentially libellous statements
- Plagiarised material; any material in violation of any laws, including copyright
- Private, personal information published without consent
- Information or links unrelated to the content of the forum
- Commercial promotions or spam
- Alleges a breach of a Council's policy or the law.

The Council's response to any communication received not meeting the above criteria will be to either ignore it, inform the sender of our policy or send a brief response as appropriate. This will be at the Council's discretion based on the message received, given our limited resources available. Any information posted on the Facebook or Instagram pages not in line with the above criteria will be removed as quickly as practically possible. Repeat offenders will be blocked. The Council may post a statement that '*A post breaching the Council's Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy has been removed*'. If the post alleges a breach of a Council's policy or the law, the person who posted it will be able to submit a formal complaint to the Council or report the matter to the Police as soon as possible to allow due process.

© Copyright 2025

Adapted from the SLCC model Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy

SLCC retains copyright

## **Council Website**

Where necessary, we may direct those contacting us to our website to see the required information, or we may forward their question to one of our Councillors for consideration and response. We may not respond to every comment we receive, particularly if we are experiencing a heavy workload.

The following items will NOT be included on the website:

- Articles affiliated to, or promoting any political organisation;
- Commercial advertisements;
- Publicity for any non-charitable fundraising event.

## **Council Email**

The Officers to the Council have their own council email address: [clerk@abertilleryandllanhilleth-wcc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@abertilleryandllanhilleth-wcc.gov.uk)

The email account is monitored during office hours, Monday to Friday 9am to 1pm. We aim to reply to all queries as soon as we can. An 'out of office' message will be used as appropriate.

The Clerk and Deputy Clerks are responsible for dealing with all email received and passing on any relevant mail to members or external agencies for information and/or action. All communications on behalf of the Council will usually come from the Clerk or Deputy Clerks, and/or otherwise will always be copied to the Council's email address. New emails which require data to be passed on will be followed up where necessary with a data consent form for completion before action is taken with that correspondence.

Individual councillors are also provided with council-owned email addresses and are at liberty to communicate directly with constituents in relation to their own personal views and, if appropriate, copy in the Council email address. Any emails copied to the Clerk become official Council communications and will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act. Any emails that are sent or received by councillors are subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

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

## **Text Messages and Whatsapp (SMS)**

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

Use of SMS should be limited to:

- Reminders (but not as the primary means of notification) of practical aspects of meetings, for example dates and times;
- A tool for rapid communication for sharing information in the event of an emerging situation facing the community, for example, flooding;

© Copyright 2025

Adapted from the SLCC model Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy

SLCC retains copyright

SMS should not be used for:

- Day-to-day discussion of, and views on, Council policies and their implementation;
- As evidence of agreement/disagreement;
- An alternative to voting;
- An agreement of a specific course of action or financial commitment by the Council;
- Providing feedback to other Councillors;
- Proposing agenda items, sharing papers, notification in advance of apologies.

### **Video Conferencing**

If this medium is used to communicate, this policy also applies.

The Council is able to hold formal meetings via video conferencing.

### **Internal communication and access to information within the Council**

The Council is continually looking at ways to improve its working and the use of social media and electronic communications is a major factor in delivering improvement.

### **Councillors are required to abide by the Code of Conduct and the General Data Protection regulation (formerly the Data Protection Act) in all their work on behalf of the Council**

As more and more information becomes available at the press of a button, it is vital that all information is treated sensitively and securely. Councillors are expected to be aware of the confidentiality of information they have access to and not to share confidential information with anyone. Failure to properly observe confidentiality may be seen as a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct and will be dealt with through prescribed procedures. It may result in a member being reported to the Public Services Ombudsman. It may also lead to criminal proceedings.

Members should also be careful only to copy essential recipients in to emails. Think about whether you need to, and if possible avoid using the 'Reply to All' option, but of course copy in all who need to know and ensure irrelevant email trails (earlier emails on the same subject which are no longer relevant) are removed.

Councillors who post on social media must observe the Code of Conduct. Councillors are personally responsible for the social media content they create, publish and share. Being a Councillor does not prevent a member of the public from pursuing legal action following the publication of untrue statement and Councillors may be held personally liable.

Any Councillor posting, referring to themselves as a Councillor – even if it is in a personal capacity – may be considered as acting in an official capacity.

When posting to social media, it should be remembered that:

- The Councillor is an elected representative of the Council;
- Any post can affect the reputation of the Council;
- It is the Council which is the corporate decision-making body – no Councillor can independently make decisions for the Council over social media;

© Copyright 2025

Adapted from the SLCC model Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy

SLCC retains copyright

- Some issues and communications are best left to the Council's official social media accounts;
- Having a single voice or message can be critical in some situations;
- The Council cannot be involved in party political issues;
- It is not necessary to respond or make comment on everything on social media – in fact sometimes it is better not to;
- Posts must not contain any form of discrimination – including racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia or religious intolerance.

Everyone should be reminded that a good general rule is that if there is uncertainty about something – stop, think and ask for advice before doing anything else.

Adopted by the Council: 24 September 2025

Date of Review: September 2026