

Elected Members

Elected Member Social Media and Communications

Objective

This policy details legislative obligations and establishes protocols for the Shire of Koorda's ("the Shire") official communications with our community, to ensure the Shire is professionally and accurately represented and to maximise a positive public perception of the Shire.

Policy

Application

This policy applies to:

- Communications initiated or responded to by the Shire with our community; and
- Council Members when making comment in either their Shire of Koorda role or in a personal capacity about matters relevant to the Shire.

Definitions

TERM	DEFINITION
Act	The <i>Local Government Act 1995</i> .
Code of Conduct	The Shire of Koorda Code of Conduct: Employees and/or the Code of Conduct for Council Members, Committee Members and Candidates.
Council	The Council of the Shire of Koorda.
Council Member	A person who is currently serving a term of office as an elected member of the Council in accordance with the Act.
Employee	A person employed by the Shire of Koorda, including contractors engaged under a contract of service.
Media	A media or news organisation including print, broadcast or online.
Official communications	Communication that has been prepared to share information via broad communication channels which may include website, social media, newsletters, advertising or media release.
Social media	A social networking channel that enables users to create and share information.
Website	A website managed by the Shire including sites to promote a particular service or function.

Official Communications

The purposes of the Shire's official communications include:

- Sharing information required by law to be publicly available.
- Sharing information that is of interest and benefit to the Community.
- Promoting Shire events and services.
- Promoting Public Notices and community consultation / engagement opportunities.
- Answering questions and responding to requests for information relevant to the role of the Shire.
- Receiving and responding to community feedback, ideas, comments, compliments and complaints.

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

The Shire 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:

- Website;
- Advertising and promotional materials;
- Media releases prepared for the Shire President to promote specific Shire positions;
- Social media; and
- Community newsletters, letter drops and other modes of communications undertaken by the Shire's Administration at the discretion of the CEO.

Speaking on behalf of the Shire

The Shire President is the official spokesperson for the Shire, representing the Local Government in official communications, including; speeches, comment, print, electronic and social media.

Where the Shire President is unavailable, the Deputy President may act as the spokesperson.

The CEO may speak on behalf of the Shire, where authorised to do so by the Shire President.

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. 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 opportunity to speak on behalf of the Shire.

Communications by Council Members and employees, whether undertaken in an authorised official capacity or as a personal communication, must not:

- bring the Shire into disrepute,
- compromise the person's effectiveness in their role with the Shire,
- imply the Shire's endorsement of personal views,
- imply the Council Member or employee is speaking on behalf of the Shire, unless authorised to do so, or
- disclose, without authorisation, confidential information.

Social media accounts or unsecured website forums must not be used to transact meetings which relate to the official business of the Shire.

Council member communications must comply with the Code of Conduct and the *Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007*.

Responding to Media Enquiries

All enquiries from the Media for an official Shire of Koorda comment, whether made to an individual Council Member or Employee, must be directed to the CEO or a person authorised by the CEO.

Information will be coordinated to support the Shire President or CEO (where authorised) to make an official response on behalf of the Shire.

Council Members may make comments to the media in a personal capacity – refer to clause ***"Council Member Statements on Shire Matters"*** below.

Website

The Shire will maintain an official website, as our community's on-line resource to access to the Shire's official communications.

Social Media

The Shire uses Social Media to facilitate interactive information sharing and to provide responsive feedback to our community. Social Media will not however, be used by the Shire to communicate or respond to matters that are complex or relate to a person's or entity's private affairs.

Social media means websites and applications whereby users create or participate in online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, photos, videos and other content.

Examples of social media platforms include:

- Social networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter
- Media sharing networks such as Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat
- Discussion forums such as Reddit
- Content curating networks such as Pinterest
- Consumer review networks such as TripAdvisor and Yelp
- Blogging and publishing networks such as WordPress and Tumblr

The Shire may also post and contribute to Social Media hosted by others, so as to ensure that the Shire's strategic objectives are appropriately represented and promoted.

The Shire actively seeks ideas, questions and feedback from our community however, we expect participants to behave in a respectful manner. The Shire will moderate its Social Media accounts to address and where necessary delete content deemed to be:

- Offensive, abusive, defamatory, objectionable, inaccurate, false or misleading;
- Promotional, soliciting or commercial in nature;
- Unlawful or incites others to break the law;
- Information which may compromise individual or community safety or security;
- Repetitive material copied and pasted or duplicated;
- Content that promotes or opposes any person campaigning for election to the Council, appointment to official office, or any ballot;
- Content that violates intellectual property rights or the legal ownership of interests or another party; and
- Any other inappropriate content or comments at the discretion of the Shire.

Where a third party contributor to a Shire's social media account is identified as posting content which is deleted in accordance with the above, the Shire may at its complete discretion block that contributor for a specific period of time or permanently.

Shire President Social Media Official Accounts

The Shire supports the Shire President in using official social media account/s to assist the Shire President in fulfilling their role under section 2.8 of the *Local Government Act*, to speak on behalf of the Local Government. The content will be administered and moderated in accordance with this policy.

These official Shire accounts must not be used by the Shire President for personal communications.

Use of Social Media in Emergency Management and Response

The Shire will use the following channels to communicate and advise our community regarding Emergency Management:

- Social media;
- Website;
- Advertising;
- Media releases or media statements;
- Community newsletters including email newsletters;

- SMS messaging; and
- Letter drops and other modes of communications at the direction of the CEO.

Record Keeping and Freedom of Information

Official communications undertaken on behalf of the Shire, 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*.

Council Member communications that relate to their role as a Council Member are subject to the requirements of the Shire's Record Keeping Plan and the *State Records Act 2000*. Council Members are responsible for transferring these records to the Shire's administration. Council Member records are also subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

Personal Communications

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

On the basis that personal or private communications may be shared or become public at some point in the future, Council Members should 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*.

Council Member Statements on Shire Matters

A Council Member may choose to make a personal statement publicly on a matter related to the business of the Shire.

Any public statement made by a Council Member, whether made in a personal capacity or in their Local Government representative capacity, must:

- Clearly state that the comment or content is a personal view only, which does not necessarily represent the views of Shire;
- Be made with reasonable care and diligence;
- Be lawful, including avoiding contravention of; copyright, defamation, discrimination or harassment laws;
- Be factually correct;
- Avoid damage to the reputation of the local government;
- Not reflect adversely on a decision of the Council;
- Not reflect adversely on the character or actions of another Council Member or Employee; and
- Maintain a respectful and positive tone and not use offensive or objectionable expressions in reference to any Council Member, Employee or community member.

A Council Member who is approached by the media for a personal statement may request the assistance of the CEO.

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 minor breach of the *Local Government Act 1995 [refer s.5.105]* and may be referred for investigation.

Related Documents (Legislation/Local Law/Policy/Procedure/Delegation)

Local Government Act 1995

Elected Member Code of Conduct

Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007

Freedom of Information Act 1992

Review History

Review Due: March 2024

Date	Council Resolution	Description of review/amendment
28/06/2023	RES: 120623	V1.0. Re-write and merge old policies (A13 & A48) as per WALGA template.
Former Policy No: A13 Media Statements/Interviews & A48 Social Media Policy		
19/07/2000		Adoption of Policy (A13)
15/06/2011	RES: 110611	Reviewed and Amended
21/05/2014		Adoption of Policy (A48)

