



G23 Communications and Social Media Policy

Policy Objective

This policy establishes protocols for the Shire of Ravensthorpe's official communications with our community to ensure the Shire of Ravensthorpe is professionally and accurately represented and to maximise a positive public perception of the Shire.

Policy

Council policy scope

This policy applies to:

1. Communications initiated or responded to by the Shire of Ravensthorpe with our community; and
2. Elected Members when making comment in either their Shire of Ravensthorpe role or in a personal capacity.

1. 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 of Ravensthorpe 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 shared including:

- Shire website
- Shire digital newsletter
- Shire social media page
- Local community newspapers and/or statewide publication in the *West Australian*
- Press releases issued to local media organisations including print, TV and radio
- Information stand at community markets
- Posters, mailbox drops and community noticeboards



2. Speaking on behalf of the Shire of Ravensthorpe

The Shire President is the official spokesperson for the Shire and may represent the Shire in official communications, including; speeches, comments and interviews with the media, in official correspondence and on social media. [s.2.8(1)(d) of the *Local Government Act 1995*]

Where the Shire President is unavailable, the Deputy Shire President may act as the spokesperson. [s.2.9 and s.5.34 of the *Local Government Act 1995*]

The CEO may speak on behalf of the Shire of Ravensthorpe, where authorised to do so by the Shire President. [s.5.41(f) of the *Local Government Act 1995*].

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 of Ravensthorpe.

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

- bring the Shire of Ravensthorpe into disrepute,
- compromise the person's effectiveness in their role with the Shire,
- compromise the effectiveness of the Shire of Ravensthorpe; imply the Shire's endorsement of personal views, 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 of Ravensthorpe.

Elected member communications must comply with the Code of Conduct and the *Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021*.

3. Responding to media enquiries

All enquiries from the media for an official Shire of Ravensthorpe comment, whether made to an individual Elected 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 of Ravensthorpe.

Elected members may make comments to the media in a personal capacity – refer to clause 5.4 below.

4. Website

The Shire of Ravensthorpe will maintain an official website, as our community's online resource to access all of the Shire's official communications.

5. Social media

The Shire of Ravensthorpe uses social media to share information with our community. Social media will not however, be used by the Shire to engage directly or respond to questions.



The Shire of Ravensthorpe maintains the following social media accounts:

- Facebook
- YouTube

The Shire of Ravensthorpe may also share posts from other government agencies if appropriate, for example DFES during emergency situations. The Shire may also post and contribute to social media hosted by others if appropriate.

The Shire expects participants to behave in a respectful manner online. The Shire of Ravensthorpe will moderate content on social media and where necessary delete inappropriate content.

Where a third party contributor to a Shire of Ravensthorpe 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.

5.1 Elected Member social media official accounts

Where an elected member chooses to use social media in fulfilling their role under section 2.10 of the *Local Government Act 1995*, he/she will moderate their own social media accounts to address and where necessary delete inappropriate content, with the exception of b), i), j) and l) as identified in the definition as soon as the elected member becomes aware or as soon as practicable once notified.

5.2 Use of Social Media in emergency

During times of emergency the Shire of Ravensthorpe will use Facebook to communicate and advise our community.

5.3 Personal communications

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

Therefore, on the basis that personal or private communications may be shared or become public at some point in the future, Elected Members must ensure that their personal or private communications do not breach the requirements of this policy, the Code of Conduct and the *Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021*.

5.4 Elected Member statements on Shire matters

An Elected Member may choose to make a personal statement publicly on a matter related to the business of the Shire of Ravensthorpe.

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

1. Clearly state that the comment or content is a personal view only, which does not necessarily represent the views of Shire of Ravensthorpe;
2. Be made with reasonable care and diligence;



3. Be lawful, including avoiding contravention of; copyright, defamation, discrimination or harassment laws;
4. Be factually correct;
5. Avoid damage to the reputation of the local government;
6. Not reflect adversely on a decision of the Council;
7. Not reflect adversely on the character or actions of another Elected Member or Employee;
8. Maintain a respectful and positive tone and not use offensive or objectionable expressions in reference to any Elected Member, Employee or community member.

An Elected 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 (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021*, may constitute a serious breach of the *Local Government Act 1995* and may be referred for investigation.

6. Definitions

Social media - social media is a tool for communication and sharing of information.

Inappropriate Content -

- a) is offensive, abusive, defamatory, objectionable, inaccurate, false or misleading;
- b) is promotional, soliciting or commercial in nature;
- c) is unlawful or incites others to break the law;
- d) is overtly sexual or explicit;
- e) is threatening or describing violent events or behaviours;
- f) refers to or encourages the use of illegal drugs;
- g) is harassing or hateful to an organisation or person, including the Shire of Ravensthorpe, our employees, stakeholders, associates and suppliers;
- h) contains information which may compromise individual or community safety or security;
- i) is repetitive material copied and pasted or duplicated;
- j) promotes or opposes any person campaigning for election to the Council, appointment to official office, or any ballot;
- k) violates intellectual property rights or the legal ownership of interests or another party; and
- l) contains inappropriate content or comments at the discretion of the Shire.

DOCUMENT CONTROL BOX		
Custodian: Chief Executive Officer	Decision Maker: Council	
Compliance Requirements: Compliance Calendar (July) [Review of Policy]		
Legislation:	Local Government Act 1995 Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021 State Records Act 2000 Freedom of Information Act 1992	
Industry:		
Organisational:	Council Policy G1 Code of Conduct for Council Members, Committee Members and Candidates	
Document Management:		
Risk Rating: Medium	Review Frequency: 2 Years	Next Due:
Version #	Decision Reference:	Description:
a	OCM 16/11/2021 Item 13.2	Policy for Communications and Social Media
b	OCM 15/12/2025 Item 12.1.1	Comprehensive Policy Register Review