



Cloch Housing Association

Policy Name	Social Media
Policy Category	Finance (IT)
Policy Number	019
Date Adopted	21/02/2017
Last Review	22/05/2018
This Review	25/02/2021
Next Review	25/02/2024
Equalities Impact Assessment Required	No
Link to other policies	Code of Conduct, Email & Internet
Consultation	No
Need for Procedure	No

1. Introduction

1. Cloch Housing Association (CHA) recognise that there is a need to be connected with customers and other stakeholders through online social media.
2. Social media or social networking sites are purpose built to provide an online platform for registered users to connect, create and share content with one another, to discover new or relevant information based on their location, interests or hobbies and to connect with likeminded people who share a common interest or goal. Organisations have also seen value in using social media as a way to keep their customers informed and assisting them when there are any issues that require to be addressed.

2. Purpose

1. Social media can provide benefits to Association's tenants, residents and prospective customers. By implementing the use of social media, staff can better inform their customers about new or existing services, works being carried out, upcoming events, and publications.
2. The purpose of this policy is to recognise the importance of online platforms that shape our reputation with stakeholders, customers, and partners, current and future employees. The policy is to make employees and agency staff aware of standards & guidelines when using social media.
3. The policy applies to all employees, Board Members and agency staff of the Association.

3. Definitions

- a) Board Members: refers to Board members at CHA.
- b) Page: refers to an account, group, profile or website representing CHA.
- c) Hashtag: a hash sign (#) followed by a word or phrases used to identify a post with a specific topic. Example: I am listening to some Adele today #Top20.
- d) Infographic: a visual representation of information to help simplify a complicated subject or turn an otherwise boring subject into a captivating experience.
- e) Screenshot: also known as "screen grabbing" whereby a user can save an image of a site or application, depending on what device they are using.
- f) Social Media: a variety of online technology tools that enable people to communicate easily via the internet to share information and resources. Examples of social network sites include Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.
- g) Named officers: employees trained in using or have an understanding of Social Media as part of their role within the association.
- h) Contributor: an online user or visitor to a social media page.

4. Aims & Objectives

4.1 The Association is committed to:

- Supporting our employees' right to interact socially on the internet through social media provided they do it in a responsible way.
- Recognising the importance of our named officers joining in and helping shape conversation through blogging and interaction with social media.
- Providing training for named officers responsible for maintaining Social Media on behalf of the Association to ensure they understand and effectively implement their responsibilities in relation to this policy.
- Ensuring the policy and associated procedures are applied appropriately and consistently.
- Ensuring staff members are protected against any negative comments that could arise from stakeholders, customers or partners in line with the Association's Policies.
- Ensuring the policy is implemented in line with the Association's Health and Safety Policy and associated legislation.

4.2 The Association and employees must protect the organisations' reputation at all times and uphold the professional standards that are expected within the workplace.

4.3 This policy will assist our named officers to make appropriate decisions about postings on sites including (but not limited to) Facebook, Twitter, blogs, personal websites, Flickr or other picture sharing sites and comments online on blogs or forums.

4.4 These sites are referred to collectively as "social networking sites" or "Social Networks" in this policy.

4.5 The policy is designed to protect the reputation, privacy, confidentiality, and interests of the Association and our current, past and potential projects, employees, partners, customers, and competitors.

5. Personal Use of Social Networking Sites, (reference to Terms & Conditions of Employment)

5.1 Know and follow the Association's code of conduct, e-mail and internet policies.

5.2 Accessing social network sites should not interfere with your job, your colleagues or commitment to customers. If you are not using social networking sites to support you directly in your employed position you should always access such sites in your own time.

5.3 Be aware of what you are posting on social networking sites both professionally and personally, if you identify yourself as a staff member or Board member of the organisation, ensure that your profile and related content is consistent with how you would wish to present yourself with colleagues and customers.

- 5.4 If you publish to any website that is not owned by the Association, and it has something to do with the work you do or services associated with the organisation, use a disclaimer such as “views expressed here are my own”.
- 5.5 Whilst working from home, ensure that location data is switched off before posting. This is to ensure the safety of staff.
- 5.6 Be aware that some user accounts may not be legitimate. In addition to this, some links received by the Association’s social networking site(s) may be spam/phishing attacks. Ensure that sources are reliable before clicking. If you are unsure about the legitimacy of information, contact the Association’s ICT department for further advice.
- 5.7 If an employee or Board member is using a social networking site that mentions or identifies the Association; including if fellow members of the site know an employee works for the Association; an employee / Board member must not do anything that would lead the organisation to be viewed in a negative light.
- 5.8 No employee other than a named officer is authorised to speak on behalf of the Association unless given permission by their Line Manager. If an employee is authorised to speak on behalf of their employer, the social media policy will apply.

Confidential Information

- 5.9 Employees and Board members may not share information on social networks that is confidential and proprietary about the Association. This includes information about organisational change, projects, programmes, finances, employees, customers, tenants and any other information that has not been made publically available by the organisation. These are given as examples only and do not cover the range of what is confidential and proprietary. If an employee or Board member does this it could result in disciplinary action up to and including employee termination and Board expulsion.
- 5.10 Do not use corporate branding, including company logos, on websites or social networks without permission from the Leadership Team. This aims to prevent the view appearance that an employee or Board member, speaks for or represents the Association.

6. Respect & Privacy Rights

- 6.1 Speak respectfully and knowledgably in a professional manner on social networks about the Association’s past current, future projects, employees, Board members, partners and competitors. You should not engage in name-calling or offensive behaviour online that could reflect negatively on the reputation of the Association.
- 6.2 The use of copyrighted materials, unfounded or derogatory statements, or misrepresentation is viewed unfavourably by the Association, may be considered as gross misconduct, and there for could result in disciplinary action up to and including employment termination and management expulsion.

- 6.3 Employees and Board members must respect the privacy rights of our current employees and Board members by never writing about or displaying organisational details. This could be a breach of their privacy or confidentiality. If an employee does not adhere to this, this may be considered as gross misconduct and therefore could result in disciplinary action up to and including employment termination and Board expulsion.
- 6.4 Approved contractor should meet the requirements specified within this policy ensuring that their respected staff members don't post confidential or sensitive information on any online platform. This includes comments relating to employees or the Association.
- 6.5 Sites such as twitter have limited restrictions on privacy and thus can have the potential to be abused by members of the public and indeed organisations. Staff of the Association should refrain from browsing personally registered accounts. This includes tenants and prospective tenants.

7. Legal Liability

- 7.1 Employees could be legally liable for things they post or present online. The Association for commentary, content, can discipline up and including dismissal employees or images that are defamatory, pornographic, offensive, discriminating, intimidating, aggressive, harassing, libellous, or that can otherwise create a hostile work environment.

8. Media Contact via Social Networking Sites

- 8.1 The relevant member of the Leadership Team will manage Media contact about the Association.
- 8.2 Should a member of the Board or staff be contacted by the media regarding a project, employees, partners, customers, or competitors, they should refer the member of the press to the relevant member of the Leadership Team. Employees and governing body members need to be aware that if a journalist sees something they have written on a social networking site and they can identify that the employee works for the organisation, they may use it in their media.

9. Child Protection

- 9.1 If a page is set up in the name of a youth group, it is essential that an employee of the Association will becomes a member to oversee content and activity. The employee must also monitor conversations, media content and activity that has been created/shared by members. Challenge, educate or intervene where as necessary.
- 9.2 Boundaries between professional and personal lives should be maintained by customising privacy settings on respected social networks. This is to ensure that inappropriate personal information is not visible to members of the page. See below for links relating on how this can be achieved.

- a. Facebook <http://goo.gl/ZMDLij>
- b. LinkedIn <http://goo.gl/nCJjaZ>
- c. Twitter <http://goo.gl/HX46OD>
- d. YouTube <http://goo.gl/ZTo4WZ>

Further information can be found at: www.staysafeonline.org

- 9.3 Prior to events employees of the Association should make the public aware of any photographs that may be taken on the day by that of a staff member or third party working on behalf of the Association. Should members of the public wish their photo not to be taken they should inform a staff member.

10. Association & Employee Compliance

- 10.1 If employees fail to comply with this Social Media Policy, they may be investigated for breach of conduct under the Dignity at Work, Grievance or Disciplinary Policy. An employee can be disciplined up to and including dismissal.
- 10.2 The Association will make this policy available to all employees. The Association has a responsibility to investigate and take any action arising from complaints or concerns about infringements.
- 10.3 The Association must ensure this policy is available to all agency staff and that they adhere to it as part of their employment.
- 10.4 Named officers will monitor the Association's Social Media accounts on regular intervals to ensure that the data and information displayed is acceptable and complies with equalities and data protection legislation as well as our own policies.

11. Policy Reporting

- 11.1 Named officers will register social media issues with the Leadership Team. This will be reported on at least an annual basis to: Finance & Corporate Services Sub Committee.

12. Appeals & Complaints

- 12.1 Appeals or complaints against the operation of the Social Media Policy will be processed using the Association's complaints handling procedure.

13. Equality Commitment

- 13.1 The Association is committed to tackling discrimination on the grounds of sex or marital status, racial grounds or grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language, social origin, or of other personal attributes including beliefs, such as religious beliefs or political opinions.

13.2 The Association seeks to embrace diversity both within the workplace and that of their respected online social media pages, promoting an equal and friendly environment for staff and customers respectfully.

14. Creation of Pages

14.1 Availability of suitable usernames should be considered before registering or creating social media accounts. It is important to ensure that the username is relatable to that of the organisation or the content published on the page. Where it is possible ensure that social media account usernames or hyperlinks are consistent. Some sites allow for a username to be changed, however it is advisable to avoid using this feature.

14.2 When creating a new account, staff should avoid using symbols, underscoring and numbers for example john_smith01. Instead the following format should be used e.g. JohnSmith.

14.3 A new page should only be considered where there is a clear organisational requirement which can be proven and that resources are available to maintain it. Pages should be only created following agreement by the Leadership Team.

14.4 Third party sites can be utilised where they are of benefit in the running of pages, this may include, creation of content, editing and repurposing of imagery, video uploading and the gathering of analytical data subject to copyright legislation. These accounts should be agreed as and when required with the appropriate Leadership Team.

15. Review

15.1 The Association will review their social networking sites periodically. This may include assessing content and customer feedback received which assists in providing a better online service.

16. Closure

16.1 Accounts should only be deactivated or deleted with approval from the Leadership Team. Whether the account is being deactivated, deleted or moved the Association must inform users before doing so.

16.2 Online tools used in conjunction with social networking sites should also be deactivated or deleted where they are no longer required.

17. Creation of Content

17.1 Content, including descriptive text, disclaimers and images should be collated and uploaded for the launch of a new page. It should be noted where possible that “we reserve the right to remove inappropriate comments”.

17.2 Adhere to copyright laws. When using other people’s work that credit is given with permission obtained beforehand. A creator may ask for their site or online account(s) to be mentioned within the image description. Check with your manager before proceeding.

- 17.3 Content can be repurposed to provide new or updated information to customers.. Text should be clear and concise to support users with screen reading technologies, ensuring that they can be informed as others.
- 17.4 Hashtags should be unbranded e.g. the promotion of a particular product or organisation. It is also important to note that hashtags also have the potential to be misinterpreted.
- 17.5 For both accessibility and general knowledge, in the first instance of using an acronym it should be spelled out with the shortened version in brackets e.g. Cloch Housing Association (CHA).
- 17.6 When uploading an image provide a brief description of what the image is e.g. Flats at Fox Street.
- 17.7 Where required, content should be approved by a section manager before being uploaded or scheduled to the respective social network(s).

18. Operation

- 18.1 The Association will ensure to follow social media network terms of use which varies depending on social media network being used.
- 18.2 Monitoring of social networking sites will be carried out during office opening hours unless otherwise specified by the Leadership Team. Timescales for responses to comments and messages will be made in accordance of our customer service standards. Where a customer makes a complaint, the complaints handling procedure will apply.
- 18.3 Content will be created to consult, engage, educate, inform, involve and sign post our customers. We will post factually and as transparently as possible, maintaining respect for and privacy of our customers. We won't post anything which may be viewed as objectionable or inflammatory, such as politics and religion.
- 18.4 The Association, on a very rare occasion may publish / post something that is factually inaccurate or is seen as inappropriate. If this is found to be the case we will make best efforts to acknowledge this by apologising that it has happened, removing and if factually inaccurate, replacing inaccurate information with correct information.
- 18.5 We will respect our customer's views but will not tolerate foul language, abusive behaviours or interactions that is likely to cause extreme offence. We expect similar standards for our staff when speaking to customers. If comments or messages received have such expression we may consider to and action removal of abusive comments. Furthermore we may also consider blocking the bad actors should this behaviour continue. Where the comment or post cannot be removed it may be reported.
- 18.6 We will assess the appropriateness of content when looking to share that which is not our own. If required through copyright laws we will ask permission to use



content before publishing it on our own social networks. If possible we will share originally posted content which uses the original creator's post.

- 18.7 The Association will commit to having staff who have an interest, knowledge or who manage our social networking site as part of their job to develop and enhance our social media presence.