



OVERSTRAND MUNICIPALITY

Social Media Policy

March 2017

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Account	A valid profile using a social media platform for the purpose of official social media use. Without an account, one cannot create a profile.
Citizen	Any individual that resides in the country.
Citizen engagement accounts	Social media platforms used primarily for the communication and interaction with the citizens of the Western Cape. Such accounts make use of an informal and relaxed tone.
Following	The act of a person or entity gaining access to a social media platform via a particular mechanism or the permission of the account owner in order to view content that is of interest to them.
Handles	A handle is another word used to define a username on select social media platforms as chosen by someone using that specific social media platform.
Link / Hyperlink	A segment of text or a graphic that a user can click on, which takes you to different parts of a webpage or between two different websites.
Media channels	The methods used to communicate a message, including spoken words, print, radio, television, or the Internet.
Municipality	One of the Local Government entities in the Western Cape. The Municipality which you serve as an employee, consultant or councillor is the Municipality referred to in this document.
Networks	Interconnected paths of communication between various social media platforms, people, businesses and groups.
Official channels	A means of communication through which any content passes is conveyed or disseminated, relating to an office and its administration approved by, recognized by, or issued from authority.
Online community	A group of people using social media tools as a means of sharing content and communicating with each other.
Social media platforms	The tools or mechanisms that are used to facilitate the creation and exchange of content generated for and by users.
Platform	A framework upon which tools of communication such as social media operate.
Post	This is a piece of content that is shared on a social media platform.
Posted	The act of having shared a piece of content on a social media platform.
Profile	A profile is a description a registered user or organisation inputs about themselves on a social media platform. This may include basic information about the user or organisation, a picture, a description and links.
Public space	In the context of social media, this refers to areas online where the general public partakes in various forms of engagement in a personal and professional capacity.
Redirect	Webserver function that sends a user from one URL to another more often than not via a link.
Sharing	The act of passing on content to and from individuals, groups and

	organisations across social media platforms.
Social Media	A collection of interactive online platforms and tools that individuals, groups and other organisations use to share content, profiles, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives and media itself. It allows for the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Examples include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, Google+, blogs, comments facilities on third party websites, mobile and tablet apps and any other form of electronic communication to which it is possible to post messages that are visible to the public.
Social Media Playbook	The Western Cape Municipal Social Media Playbook is a document which municipal employees, contractors and councillors can refer for practical guidance on how to communicate on social media on behalf of the Municipality.
Social Media Presence	When an individual, group or organisation creates an account on any social media platform.
Subscribing	When an individual or organization selects to have access to an online service in order to receive up to date information.
Tools	These tools include access to social media platforms; budget and/or cellphone allowance to manage municipal social media platforms remotely (ie. airtime and/or data to manage social media via smartphone).
Tone	This is implied by the words selected and in how the words are arranged. It is also determined by the writer's attitude and knowledge towards the subject and the reader. For example choosing to write in a formal way or using slang.
Transactional engagement	Two-way communication that focuses on positive working relationships in exchange for desirable rewards and where feedback is required. This is not exclusively based on the exchange of anything of monetary value.
Unfollow	To stop following someone's activities or remove oneself as a member of a community on a social media platform
User-generated content	This term is used to describe any form of content such as video, blogs, images, audio files, and other forms of media that are created by users online and is accessible to other users.
Username	A sequence of characters that is used as identification and is required when logging on to a computer or a social media platform.
Users	An individual or organisation that partakes in any type of engagement or information sharing on a social media platform.

1. INTRODUCTION

Overstrand Municipality realises the need to utilise modern communication resources in this information age.

Government Communication is developmental in its nature, as the primary goal of it is empowering communities through information (communication). As Communicators, we need to constantly devise creative approaches to communication as opposed to mainstream communication channels, in order to reach all sectors of the economy.

That means as we admit to having different stakeholders/target audiences (council, administration, ratepayers, residents, publics, businesses, government) we cannot have a blanket approach to communicate to all these stakeholders - we need to devise the most effective means of communication for each stakeholder group, and we need to maximise our communication in order to uphold and promote Overstrand Municipality's reputation.

Not everybody in the community uses social media and it is, therefore, essential to ensure that social media and mainstream media work together and reinforce each other.

1.1 Why is Social Media important?

People are using social media to engage in numerous behaviours including socialisation, entertainment and information seeking.

It is important for Overstrand Municipality to improve the efficiency of our communication processes through social media use by continuously engaging communities on service delivery matters, being responsive to communities and allowing two-way communication at all times.

In order to reach as many people as possible, Overstrand Municipality balances its communications programme by engaging in traditional media as well as social media. The primary purpose of social media is to take part in on-going conversations of interest to the Municipality, disseminate brief message quickly, provide links for further information, and promote municipal-sponsored activities.

This policy is also informed by the Overstrand Municipality Communication's Policy, Language Policy, the Policy on Corporate identity and Branding as well the ICT Policies.

1.2 The role of social media is to:

- 1.2.1 Improve service delivery.
- 1.2.2 Allow two-way dialogue.
- 1.2.3 Connect the Municipality with the communities we serve in a cost-effective way that promotes good relationships.
- 1.2.4 Improve relationships between municipalities and key sectors of the community, and to
- 1.2.5 Strengthen government and civil society.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the framework, requirements and processes that form the basis of how the Municipality will use social media to interact and engage with its residents. This policy sets out key guidelines for how to maintain a social media presence and it forms the basis for the strategy, implementation, monitoring and evaluation documents in order to promote and protect Overstrand Municipality's image.

It also defines roles and responsibilities for the content of the Municipality's account.

1.4 The primary goals of using social media are as follows:

1.4.1 To increase awareness of municipal services

- i Inform policies *et al*,
- ii promotes events,
- iii educate,
- iv consult and engage with specific target groups,

1.4.2 Complement the existing communication methods and processes

1.4.3 Provide an additional platform through which Overstrand Municipality keeps abreast of ratepayer and general public comments and perceptions regarding the municipality

1.4.4 Disseminate urgent information quickly

1.4.5 Correct misinformation, remedy mistakes or alter services to build strong relationships

1.4.6 Provide another method by which stakeholders can engage with the municipality

1.4.7 Use social media as another way to collaborate with the public, businesses and other organ of state on mutually beneficial programmes and initiatives.

1.5 Scope

1.5.1 Social media is fundamentally different to mainstream media. It has its own set of demands brought about by the nature of the technology: For example, social media is always ON, and this creates a new set of demands.

1.5.2 Social media brings with it a degree of openness and transparency - social media also makes it possible for the Municipality to hear directly from the people who are impacted by their decisions - both positive and negative.

People can also contribute to the policy development process. By using social media, the Municipality can turn a one-way communication activity into a two-way, or even multi-way interaction where audiences respond to the Municipality - thus creating opportunities for Overstrand Municipality to engage with its community.

1.5.3 It is important to understand that social media cannot replace other forms of communication and there are risks associated with using it. But Municipalities can minimize problems by developing plans and policies to manage social media for maximum benefit. Therefore, there should be clear guidelines as to what is and what is not allowed.

- 1.5.4 This policy covers all facets of social media with regards to the Municipality's use thereof, as well as the values, responsibilities, content guidelines, employee interactions, citizen conduct and brand compliance. These are all aspects that have to be adhered to and it is the scope of this policy to define exactly what is expected from each of these key areas.
- i This policy applies to all employees who are authorised to post information on the Municipalities social media sites in an official capacity on behalf of the Municipality
 - ii It doesn't apply to personal use of social media conducted on personal equipment
 - iii Communication through social media should comply with all other relevant municipal policies, procedures and guidelines e.g Communication Policy, Language Policy, Code of Conduct and ICT Policy

1.6 Background

- 1.6.1 Overstrand Municipality is committed to openness and transparency, and the value of engaging stakeholders in meaningful conversations regarding the Municipality's programmes, services and policies. Overstrand Municipality recognises that social media provide valuable opportunities to communicate with stakeholders and provide timely, accurate, and helpful information. Furthermore, the Municipality has an inherent interest in being part of on-line conversations that mention the municipality in order to enhance our brand reputation as a public service corporation committed to excellence.
- 1.6.2 Social media has afforded governments the opportunity to engage with users using a personal and more direct approach, narrowing the gap between government and communities.
- 1.6.3 As social media has become, in most cases, the chosen medium for communication, it is only natural that Overstrand Municipality takes a step towards this form of communication.
- 1.6.4 The reality is, more and more of society is consuming information through social media and electronic means. If we do not plug into that system, we as Municipality will miss the opportunity of communicating with them. For Local Government, it is becoming essential to understand how to use social media strategy. There is no 'one size fits all' social media strategy.
- 1.6.5 By adopting social media as a form of communication it can help Overstrand Municipality to better understand, respond to and attract the attention of specific audiences. It also enables interactive communication that is not possible via other platforms. Such interactivity allows for the exchange of information, perspectives and opinions among multiple audiences. It also allows effective and efficient communication to take place where those conversations are already occurring.
- 1.6.6 The dynamic nature of social media means that the Municipality is now able to engage with the community, learn more about them and in the process raise the profile of Overstrand Municipality as it moves towards Constitutional recognition.

2. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK - NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION:

- 2.1 Overstrand Municipality acknowledges that it has a responsibility to inform its internal and external stakeholders of identified issues, progress made and results achieved in addressing its mandate. There are several government policy documents that encourage the involvement of communities. These are the Municipal Systems Act, the Municipal Structures Act, and the Municipal Finance Management Act. This policy is also informed by the Overstrand Municipality's Policy on Communications and Corporate Identity etc. The Chief Information Officer will direct compliance in terms of the social media policy.
- 2.1.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996
- 2.1.2 Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000
- 2.1.3 Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, 2000
- 2.1.4 Public Service Act, 1984
- 2.1.5 The Protection of Information Act, 1982
- 2.1.6 The Copyright Act, 1987
- 2.1.7 Electronic Communications and Transactions Act, 2000
- 2.1.8 Principle 8 of the King report on Good Governance for South Africa 2009 (King III), is dedicated to stakeholder management and how this directly affects an organisations reputation.
- 2.1.9 Local Government Municipal Systems Act, no. 32 of 2000, Chapter 4: Community Participation

3. SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS MANAGEMENT

- 3.1 Communications Department will be required to manage content on the various social media accounts.
- 3.2 Departments must submit approved content on request or as they require posted on social media platforms to the Communications Department.
- 3.3 Each Department is responsible for ensuring that content on all social media platforms is updated and relevant at all times. The Communications Department must ensure consistency of messaging, to avoid confusion and miscommunication.
- 3.4 Communications Department is expected to respond to positive or negative comments on the respective social media platforms.
- 3.5 Communications Department will be responsible for the monitoring and reporting of the respective social media accounts.
- 3.6 The Communication Department will be responsible for ensuring adherence and reviewing of this policy.

4. CONTENT: RULES AND REGULATIONS

- 4.1 Content and conversations on social media should be professional and intended to inform and engage. Information posted by the Municipality is accurate, relevant and consistent with municipal policies and protocols.
- 4.2 Only appointed administrators in the Communications Department will post content and comment on the social media sites.
- 4.3 Administrators will respect confidentiality and sensitivity of the information, including financial and business information, privileged information, legal advice, personal information, home addresses and telephone numbers, or any information not generally available to the public.
- 4.4 Overstrand Municipality invites all stakeholders and interested parties to share and discuss their opinions provided that all comments remain respectful. All posts must be done within a reasonable timeframe and be in line with relevant legislation and Municipal Policies.
- 4.5 Some level of criticism is expected, and this presents an opportunity to participate in the on-going conversation, correct misinformation and deliver service. Negative comments should be responded to using constructive feedback rather than censorship.
- 4.6 It is sometimes appropriate, within the professional judgement of the administrator, to allow public commentary to take its course without Municipal intervention.
- 4.7 The Municipality's website, www.overstrand.gov.za will remain the primary online source of information. Social media will be used to complement the website and broaden the reach.
- 4.8 As Overstrand Municipality's social media presence is primarily for residents, local references can and should be made.
- 4.9 The idea is that there needs to be a consistent level of response during office hours.
- 4.10 Without speedy response time from departments, social media will not work – urging the buy-in of top management and other managers.
- 4.11 Avoid use of political jargon or use of acronyms not likely to be understood by most of the audience.
- 4.12 Overstrand Municipality is politically neutral and should react accordingly to any political comments.
- 4.13 With negative comments, for e.g on service delivery, it is important to try to take the conversation in a private channel to avoid prolonged negative conversations in public.
- 4.14 Respond to all service/query mentions required, and any frustrations that can be addressed.
- 4.15 Overstrand Municipality will not use emoticons or acronyms to communicate with fans but will use a light, friendly tone where appropriate when communicating and having a conversation with an individual.

- 4.16 Posting is forever, what is written, posted, uploaded is now a public domain. Therefore remain mindful that we are speaking on behalf of Overstrand Municipality
- 4.17 Continues monitoring of sites for inaccurate or inappropriate information and responding quickly
- 4.18 Social media is always on. This means that people can post commentary about Overstrand Municipality outside office hours. Overstrand Municipality needs to decide the hours that they will monitor and participate in social media, and make this clear on their social media sites.
- 4.19 No confidential information will be posted on any social media under any circumstance. It is critical that any information shared on the various social media platforms is not sensitive or confidential in any way.
- 4.20 Comments containing any of the following shall not be allowed on the Overstrand Municipality social media sites and may be removed by the Communications Department in conjunction with management and Legal Department:
- i Comments not topically related to the particular site
 - ii Profane language and content
 - iii Content that promotes discrimination on the basis of race, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability and sexual orientation.
 - iii Sexual content or links to sexual content
 - iv Content related to non-municipal related sales, advertising or promotions (commercial advertising)
 - v Content for the purposes of promoting a candidate for municipal, provincial or national election.
- 4.21 The nature of social media means that responsiveness is vital. Therefore, it is not feasible to subject every post or response to comprehensive approval processes. Employees responsible for updating municipal social media accounts should be empowered to respond appropriately as they see fit and to exercise good judgment in accordance with the social media code of conduct.
- 4.21 Content must not discriminate in any way and must not be seen to be biased.
- 4.23 It is the Municipality's responsibility to remain impartial yet informative when communicating with the public about political matters.
- 4.24 The Municipality is not to share political opinions of any office bearers on any of the department's social media platforms. However official statements made by office bearers which can be published on the Municipality's website can be shared on social media platforms.
- 4.25 The Municipality must not share content of a party political nature. Office bearers must use their personal accounts to publish party political statements.

5. CONTENT: DON'Ts

No employee of the municipality is permitted to share the following:

- 5.1 Any content that is unlawful, defamatory, racist, sexist, homophobic or insulting.
- 5.2 Anything that is untrue.
- 5.3 Any content that features explicit political messages or branding.
- 5.4 Content that is harassing, threatening, obscene, pornographic, indecent, lewd, suggestive or otherwise objectionable.
- 5.5 Content that criticises individual community members by name.
- 5.6 Content which infringes the privacy of others.
- 5.7 Content that is the property of someone else, without permission to use it.
- 5.8 Spam (unsolicited sales messages)
- 5.9 The same applies to content posted by members of the public on municipal platforms. If any comment by a member of the public contravenes these rules, it can be deleted.
- 5.10 Comments that are critical of the Municipality or its officials should be allowed to stand, provided they do not contravene any of the rules outlined above. Accusations will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

6. USE OF DEVICES IN COUNCIL MEETINGS

- 6.1 Council meetings are held to conduct council business and the public or representatives of the media have a right to be present. On occasion, Council may decide to hold an in a committee meeting to deal with subject matters requiring confidentiality. At in committee meetings, neither the public nor the media is permitted, and there is no broadcasting of any kind.
- 6.2 Mobile devices with internet access and cameras will, therefore, be capable of sharing information publically, in real time.
- 6.3 Media or members of the public will not be prevented from tweeting, updating, photographing proceedings or taking video footage.

7. SOCIAL MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT

7.1 For Municipal Employees

- 7.1.1 Everything employees do and say on social media reflects on the Municipality and its reputation. In conducting themselves on social media, it is important that employees use sound judgment and common sense, act with professionalism and integrity, and adhere to the Municipality's values.
- 7.1.2 Employees who violate any terms set out in this policy can be subjected to disciplinary processes.
- 7.1.3 Nothing about social media changes the responsibilities and obligations of employees or contractors of the Municipality.

- 7.1.4 It does not matter if employees use a private account or access social media outside of work hours - their obligations in terms of their contract of employment, the Code of Conduct, and all other applicable policies apply to all of their conduct on social media.
- 7.1.5 Employees or contractors of the Municipality have a legal duty to act in good faith towards the Municipality. They may therefore not do anything that damages the reputation of the Municipality and must always act in its best interests. This duty extends to their use of social media. For example, employees may not comment negatively on social media about anything associated with Overstrand Municipality.

7.2 For Councillors

- 7.2.1 Everything Councillors do and say on social media reflects on the municipality and its reputation. In conducting themselves on social media, it is important that Councillors use sound judgment and common sense, act with professionalism and integrity, and adhere to the Municipality's values.
- 7.2.2 Councillors should restrict party political messages and campaign to their personal pages. The Municipality will not share or endorse any political content on any of its social media platforms at any time.

8. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES

- 8.1 It is the Municipality's responsibility to provide training to the Communications Department using social media on behalf of the Municipality.
- 8.2 Communicators / Administrators must be provided with the necessary tools in order to manage municipal social media accounts on desktop/laptop computers and mobile/smartphone.

9. PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER AT ALL TIMES

- 9.1 Only administrators can post Municipal content on official sites and employees are not permitted to represent the municipality on these sites.
- 9.2 Municipal officials who participate in conversations on the Municipality's social media sites do so as third party visitors and, as such, are personally responsible for their comments and information posted.
- 9.3 Municipal employees using social media platforms and wishing to provide personal comments on platforms, could contravene the accepted Code of Conduct and bring the public service into disrepute or be misinterpreted as being an official representative of the Municipality.
- 9.4 All employees must adhere to the Municipality's Code of Conduct at all times.
- 9.5 Visiting social networking sites are not permitted via the municipality's infrastructure, this includes Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and any media or streaming services.

- 9.6 Any personal social media account, or accounts unrelated to the Municipality, are not to be registered using a Municipal e-mail address. This applies to any social media platform that requires an e-mail account to register. These accounts must make use of private e-mail addresses and contact details.
- 9.7 Officials cannot use municipal-related usernames or handles when using or setting up their personal accounts, e.g. *Public Servant_Lisa* or *Municipal Official_Gerhard*
- 9.8 Nothing is private on social media platforms. If individual staff members share something on any social media platform, even their own, they cannot claim that their privacy has been violated.
- 9.9 No politics on municipal pages.
- 9.10 Employees should keep their tonality professional, while not losing the personal touch.
- 9.11 All posts should be relevant to the community.
- 9.12 Content to be shared is about events, departmental collaborations, awareness campaigns, links on stories, vacancies, tenders, etc. to direct traffic to the Overstrand Municipality Website.
- 9.13 Other types of posts to share will include community information, profiling a local business (provided that you are not seen to be biased), celebrating a local achievement and community-based campaigning (where the municipality is being seen to support them)

Policy Section	Communication
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