

ITEM A-CORP (06-
2018) OC
CM 18/09/2019

TO REQUEST COUNCIL TO APPROVE THE SOCIAL MEDIA
POLICY FOR CITY OF EKURHULENI

RESOLVED

1. **That** the Corporate and Shared Service Oversight Committee report on the Communication and Brand Management's social media policy to Council **BE NOTED**.
2. **That** the City of Ekurhuleni (CoE) Social Media Policy attached to the report as **Annexure 'A'** BE APPROVED by Council.
3. **That** the Committee **NOTED** the Social Media Policy receive from SALGA attached as **Annexure AA**.



**City of
Ekurhuleni**

COMMUNICATIONS AND BRAND MANAGEMENT

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

POLICY COMPILED BY:

POLICY OWNER:

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Section	Version	Revision	Date	Page	Reason for change

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1 PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to regulate the official use of the City of Ekurhuleni (“the CoE”)’s Social Media channels.
- 1.2. Social media refers to channels that can include blogs, wikis and social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Tumblr, LinkedIn, Instagram and We Chat. However, there are many more and others are still evolving. This policy covers the broad spectrum of social media platforms that are currently available and will be available in the near future.
- 1.3. The use of social media platforms has been gaining acceptance in all spheres of governments around the world. This provides an opportunity for two-way communication between government and citizens, partners and stakeholders, where the frequency and speed of engagement has increased.
- 1.4. CoE understands that Technological innovation is a feature of our rapidly changing communication environment. It is the policy of CoE to keep up to date with these technological innovations and be aware of how technology can benefit the public.
- 1.5. This policy therefore outlines CoE’s expectations of employees, its associated partners and CoE managed Agencies’ staff with respect to media and public comment, including social media, where there is an identifiable connection with the CoE.
- 1.6. Users of CoE’s social media channels are required to demonstrate high standards of ethics and conduct and act responsibly when they exchange ideas and information on CoE’s social media networks.
- 1.7. Further, users must understand that they have responsibilities as representatives of the CoE and that their actions can have either a positive or a negative impact on the public image and reputation of CoE.
- 1.8. These expectations are not intended to restrict the right of any individual to freely express their opinions.
- 1.9. This document aims to ensure an ethical use of social media by its officials, to the extent that such use may be misinterpreted as representing the official position of the CoE.
- 1.10. This policy therefore outlines our approach to official social media use by employees, and public participation in our social media channels.
- 1.11. This policy applies to all the CoE staff, contractors and should be read in conjunction with the CoE’s relevant Communications and Media policies.

2 DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Policy, unless the context indicates otherwise, the following terms will be defined as follows:

Term	Meaning
Account	means a profile using a social media platform for the purpose of official social media use. Without an account, one cannot create a profile.
Advertising	means information and/or images published or broadcast in any media
Brand	means System of values, benefits, attributes, culture and personality defining and differentiating the CoE.
Brand Image	means the character and image of the CoE, including the CoE's name and logo which reflects its culture and is presented to various publics. This image is designed according to the corporate identity and messages to accord with and facilitate the attainment of the CoE's objectives and mandate. It is usually visibly manifested by way of branding and the use of trademarks.
Employees	means, all individuals working at all levels and grades, including senior managers, officers, directors, employees (whether permanent, fixed-term or temporary), consultants, contractors, trainees, seconded staff, home-workers, casual workers and agency staff, volunteers, interns, agents, sponsors, or any other person associated with the CoE, or any of its entities or joint ventures entered into with the CoE
Following	means 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
HOD	This refers to the Head of the Department.
Media	means all forms of print, radio, television, film, online, digital and social media.
Platform	means a framework upon which tools of communication such as social media operate.
Post	means a piece of content that is shared on a social media platform
Posted/Posting	means an act of having shared a piece of content on a social media platform
Profile	means a profile is a description of 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
Sharing	means an act of passing on content to and from individuals, groups and organisations across social media platforms
Social Media	means any website or medium that allows for public communication, including but not limited to social and professional networking sites, blogs, micro-blogging sites, video-and photo-sharing sites, fora,

	discussion boards and groups, podcasting sites and instant messaging services (including short messaging services (SMSs)).
Social Media Platforms	means the tools or mechanisms that are used to facilitate the creation and exchange of content generated for and by users
The CoE	means the City of Ekurhuleni
Unfollow	means to stop following someone's activities or remove oneself as a member of a community on a social media platform
User-generated content	means 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
Users	means an individual or organisation that partakes in any type of engagement or information sharing on a social media platform. Users also mean any CoE employee and councillors, part time and full time employees, contractors and third party suppliers and/or those authorised to generate content for social media platforms associated with the CoE.
Undesirable conduct	means any unacceptable conduct inclusive of, but not limited to, the generation of content that is detrimental to the image or reputation of the CoE, that is defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing and/or libellous, or conduct that may create a hostile work environment.
Official social media site	means any social media account that uses the CoE's logo, and/or name and represents the CoE on an official level.

3 POLICY STATEMENT

In acknowledging the opportunities and challenges occasioned by the latest developments in communication, the CoE seeks to provide the following principles to give effect to this policy: -

- 3.1. Social media is a powerful means of communication that is continuing to grow. The CoE encourages the use of social media to engage with employees, business partners, community, colleagues and stakeholders.
- 3.2. The CoE embraces the evolution and use of social media as a tool of communicating in the global world.
- 3.3. Given that social media afford users a public platform to express themselves, it is important that the CoE establishes clear guidelines regarding responsible behaviour, standards of conduct and expectations that users must adhere to when using social media for official purposes.
- 3.4. Users are expected to be mindful of the fact that any official activity on public platforms has an impact on the image of the CoE, users should at all times refrain from any activity that can tarnish this image. It should also be noted that certain conduct may be regarded as misconduct in terms of the provisions of the relevant CoE's Disciplinary Code and Procedure, and that it may also constitute a criminal offence, in which case offenders may be prosecuted through the criminal justice system. The guidelines, rules and regulations governing users' conduct during normal interaction in the CoE's Code of Conduct also apply to users' conduct online.
- 3.5. It is the policy of the CoE to allow freedom of expression, and the right of association. However, users are expected to exercise these rights in a responsible manner so as not to injure another party in any way.

- 3.6. Although social media presents new challenges, both the public and CoE employees' expectations need to be addressed, differences in communication culture explored, all the while navigating the line between official and personal use.
- 3.7. It is the policy of the CoE to manage the social media communications by its employees and manage the image of the CoE through the implementation of a social media policy.

4 LEGISLATIVE BASIS FOR THIS POLICY

The following should be read and considered in conjunction with this policy:

- a) The Constitution of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996) Chapter 2 Section 32
- b) Public Service Regulations Part 1 (H.4) Chapter 1 (PRS/1/1/H.4).
- c) Promotion of Access to Information Act (Act No. 2 of 2000) (PAIA)
- d) Government Communications Policy, 2016
- e) National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act (Act No. 43 of 1996, as amended.)
- f) The Copyright Act (Act No. 98 of 1978 as amended)
- g) Electronic Communications and Transactions Act (Act No. 25 of 2002)
- h) Protection of Personal Information Act (Act No. 4 of 2013)

5 CORPORATE COMMENT

5.1 PERSONS AUTHORISED TO SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THE CoE

Only the following designated officials, or as delegated, have the right to communicate on social media platform on any issue on behalf of the CoE as per the objectives outlined in this Policy:

- 5.1.1. Executive Mayor
- 5.1.2. Speaker of Council
- 5.1.3. Chief Whip of Council
- 5.1.4. Mayoral Spokesperson
- 5.1.5. City Manager
- 5.1.6. Head of Department: Communications & Brand Management

- 5.2 The above designated may, subject to the provisions of this policy and any other legislation applicable to the release of official information by the CoE, officially communicate with the media on any matter relating or affecting the CoE, including but not limited to, the holding of media conference, releasing of media statements/releases in respect of information relating to-

- 5.2.1. Matters of national application of interest to the CoE, such as management issues, the CoE's policies, and financial (budgetary) matters;
- 5.2.2. Any matter relating to the CoE or any matters of political nature.

6 PROCEDURES

6.1 Liaising with the Social Media

- 6.1.1. The Communications and Brand Management Department shall at all times be available to assist with social media liaison, writing, approval and distribution of the CoE and Council media releases. It is also available to assist with coordinating media interviews and filming opportunities on the CoE premises.
- 6.1.2. Employees who respond to inquiries directly from social media are required to inform the Communications and Brand Management Department of the media engagement, so it can assist with maximising the publicity and follow-up on the media opportunities.

6.2 Approval of Official Social Media Sites

- 6.2.1. The Communication and Brand Management Department must approve official social media sites and these sites must adhere to CoE's branding guidelines.
- 6.2.2. Employees must attend training facilitated by the Communications and Brand Management Department before they will be authorised to manage official CoE social media sites. The training will cover topics such as content planning, moderation, escalation procedures and reporting requirements.
- 6.2.3. Employees wishing to create an official CoE social media site are required to complete the Social Media Channel Request prior to setting it up and must notify the HoD: Communications & Brand Management once the site has been set up. Administrator access to the site must also be shared with the Digital and Social Media Manager in case of emergency intervention.

6.3 Response to Adverse Postings on External Websites

- 6.3.1 The Digital and Social Media Manager will examine any posting on any external, non-CoE, social media or other website of which they become aware that threatens or incites harm to the CoE's staff, or facilities, or any posting or website that threatens or undermines the CoE's reputation. The CoE will take appropriate action where it believes a posting or a website breaches its policies.

6.4 Personal use of social media

- 6.4.1 When it comes to personal use of social media by the CoE employees, the code of conduct for employees should be respected and considered as the guiding rule. The code of conduct for employees allows the CoE employees to act in a private capacity to influence public opinion or promote issues of public interest. All personal online communication activities should NOT bring the CoE's image into ridicule and disrepute. All employees must at all times keep their postings legal, ethical and respectful.

- 6.4.2 Personal use of social media implies that the employees are using social media for personal interest, which have nothing to do with their duties for CoE and/or their departments. However, when using the social media platforms in their personal capacity, the CoE's employees have a responsibility at all times, not to bring the CoE's image and reputation into disrepute.
- 6.4.3 All CoE employees should always think, apply their minds, use sound judgment and common sense before posting on social media. The CoE employees should remember that even if they act or speak in a personal capacity, their position as CoE employees in their respective communities may be known to anyone in the potential audience and may be misunderstood or misrepresented as an official position of the CoE.
- 6.4.4 Personal use of social media must be conducted in a manner that indicates no link or association with the CoE. For this reason, personal use is not covered in this policy.
- 6.4.5 The CoE will, however, take necessary steps should users make use of social media in a manner that has a direct, indirect or potential impact on the CoE's reputation or interests.
- 6.4.6 When using social media at personal capacity, employees should consider the following:
- a) Keep the CoE's confidential information confidential.
 - b) The CoE employees may only use personal social media platforms to share the CoE news if that information has already been officially published in the public domain.
 - c) The CoE employees must familiarise themselves with the content of any non-disclosure agreement they signed when joining the CoE, and ensure that all personal social media activities are in alignment and compliance with this policy and all other applicable regulations, acts and policies.
 - d) Keep personal social media activities distinct from the CoE's communication.
 - e) The CoE's logos and other CoE branding symbols must not be used in personal social media posts without explicit permission in writing from the designated departmental authority.
 - f) The CoE's employees can be held legally responsible for all comments that they post on their personal social media platforms.

For Political principals

- 6.4.7 Everything Councillors do and say on social media reflects on the CoE and its reputation. In conducting themselves on social media, it is important that Councillors apply their minds, use sound judgment and common sense, and in addition, act with professionalism, integrity, and adhere to the CoE's values at all times.

6.4.8 For Councillors this remains a guideline, however within any structure a councillor may refer any matters to their code of conduct of councillors to the Ethics Committee through the Speaker of Council.

6.5 Use of Social Media for the CoE

Users must –

- 6.5.1 Only disclose and discuss information about the CoE or its activities which are not confidential and are publicly available;
- 6.5.2 Take reasonable steps to ensure that content published is accurate and not misleading;
- 6.5.3 Ensure that the use of social media complies with the relevant rules of the CoE and the terms of use of the relevant social media;
- 6.5.4 Not post or share any content that is unlawful, defamatory, racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic or insulting;
- 6.5.5 Not post or share content which is harassing, threatening, obscene, pornographic, indecent, foul language, suggestive or otherwise objectionable;
- 6.5.6 Not share content that criticises individual community members, colleagues, Councillors by name or the CoE;
- 6.5.7 Not post anything that is untrue;
- 6.5.8 Generally, comply with the laws of the country, for instance those on copyright, privacy, defamation, discrimination and harassment; and
- 6.5.9 Always be respectful and courteous to others when using social media.

6.6 Policy compliance

Contravention of this policy may result in a disciplinary process followed in terms of the CoE Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Regulation.

7 ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The HoD: Communications & Brand Management and/or his/her designate is responsible for:
- a) developing an overarching social media strategy and plan for the CoE.
 - b) overseeing the creation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and final closure of a social media account for the CoE.
 - c) ensuring that only official social media sites of the CoE are operating and that all links are made available on the Municipal website.

- d) defining and communicating to all employees what appropriate Municipal information should be communicated.

7.2 The CoE must appoint/designate an employee who will be responsible for:

- a) liaising with the HoD: Communications & Brand Management and approving requests to set up social media accounts for the CoE;
- b) evaluating each request, authorising which staff member can use these social media platforms and recommending that they acquire the necessary skills;
- c) maintaining a list of official and active social networking sites as well as the employees responsible for this oversight;
- d) ensuring that all social media pages comply with the CoE's communications and branding guidelines;
- e) monitoring and reviewing the content posted for accuracy and adherence to consistent government messaging; and
- f) acting as the appointed custodian or the point of contact between the CoE, provincial, national and local counterparts.

7.3 In instances where there are resource limitations, the HoD: Communications & Brand Management will be responsible for the social media function.

7.4 Employees appointed as custodians of the social media function will have this aspect incorporated into their job description.

7.5 Communication personnel should have access to all official social media platforms within the CoE for the purposes of monitoring and following issues arising in the environment but also to monitor debates around this matters.

7.6 The HoD: Communications & Brand Management or his/her designate will be authorised to engage in debates arising in the social media environment that require immediate interaction or engagement.

8 ACCEPTABLE USE

8.1 The Municipal employees recognised as official spokespersons or representatives of, by the media or in the public space, cannot comment on the Municipal activities and/or provide commentary that is contrary to the official CoE position on official/private social media sites. They may, however, relay the contents of press releases, conferences, etc. on the public/their private social-media accounts.

8.2 Municipal employees using social media sites in their private capacity must be made aware of the Code of Conduct for Public Servants, and relevant laws and regulations that

apply in respect of privacy and confidentiality issues. They must declare upfront that they are writing in own their personal capacity so that their comments are not interpreted as the official view of the CoE.

- 8.3 Any personal social media accounts or accounts unrelated to the CoE that currently exist or will be created in future, may not be registered using a Municipal issued email address. This applies to any social media platform that requires an email account to register. These accounts must use private email addresses and contact details.
- 8.4 Municipal employees cannot use Municipal-related usernames or handles when setting up their personal accounts. e.g. Ekurhuleni_Mevis.

9 CONTENT

- 9.1 All content posted official account must be professional and reflect the CoE's values.
- 9.2 Content that is copyright protected must not be published unless authorisation has been sought from the original author.

9.3 The CoE is:

- a) responsible for ensuring that content on all municipal social media platforms is current and relevant at all times, and that derogatory comments are removed where possible
- b) expected to respond to both positive or negative engagement via their social media accounts
- c) expected to ensure that these campaigns are supported through other media channels
- d) required to manage the CoE's own content on the various social media accounts.

10 SECURITY

10.1 The Communications and Brand Management Department must ensure the password to their social media accounts are changed at least twice a year. Where users access social media accounts via their personal accounts, users must be removed from the account when they are no longer part of the operational team. It is recommended that this password complies with the CoE's IT Security Policy. The policy suggests that the password used has at least one special character and one number along with plain text.

11 LEGAL ISSUES

11.1 The CoE through its social media account managers is mandated to keep a record of all information posted online. All information and correspondence on social media must be

recorded and archived. While most social networks do not provide this functionality, third-party services allow for the implementation of this requirement.

- 11.2 When publishing information or providing advice online, necessary records must be captured, retained and filed in accordance with the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act (Act No. 43 of 1996, as amended).
- 11.3 Any content that is removed must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster in accordance with the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act.
- 11.4 CoE information may be categorised, but not restricted to the following classified information grouping.
- 11.4.1 National Security Information (hereinafter “classified information”) shall be classified at one of the following three levels.
- 11.4.2 “Top Secret” shall be applied to information, the unauthorised disclosure of which reasonably could be expected to cause exceptionally grave damage to the national security.
- 11.4.3 “Secret” shall be applied to information, the unauthorised disclosure of which reasonable could be expected to cause serious damage to the national security.
- 11.4.4 “Confidentiality” shall be applied to information, the unauthorised disclosure of which reasonably could be expected to cause damage to the national security.

12 COMMUNITY AND CITIZENS CONDUCT

12.1 The CoE must make the public and members of its community aware of its social media policy when interacting with the Municipality. Social media commentary by citizens will be removed if posted on the official CoE pages, if it:

- a) is used to defame, insult, abuse, harass, threaten or attack anyone
- b) includes the use of language that is obscene and/or offensive
- c) goes against the principles of the Constitution and discriminates against any particular race, gender, sexual preference, religion, etc.
- d) advertises or promotes commercial interests
- e) promotes illegal or unethical activities

12.2. If any comment or post by a member of the public and/or group contravenes or continue to contravene this policy, the CoE reserves the right to delete it, block that person/organisation and report the post immediately to the CoE Manager. However, comments that criticises the CoE or its officials should be allowed to stand, provided they do not contravene the provisions of this Policy.

13 MONITORING

13.1 Social media accounts will be monitored daily. Items to be monitored include the following:

- a) comments on published content and whether these adhere to social media guidelines;
- b) enquiries received via comment or inbox/direct messages; and
- c) whether online sentiments are becoming increasingly negative.

14 POLICY REVIEWS

14.1 This policy shall be effective and valid from date of approval by Council;

14.2 This policy shall be reviewed once in three years; and may also be reviewed as and when the need to do so arises which may depend on a change in circumstances, such as the law or national policy on the matter or issue, etc. The policy with proposed amendments shall be submitted to Council for approval;

15 SIGN OFF

The signatories hereof, confirm their acceptance of the contents and recommend the adoption of this policy thereof.

DESIGNATION	SIGNATURE	DATE SIGNED
POLICY OWNER		
HOD: COMMUNICATIONS AND BRAND MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT		
CITY MANAGER		
DATE OF REVIEW		