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# **Social Media Procedure**

## Document Version Control

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## Change History

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1.0	11 December 2012	Community Relations	Adopted by Council
1.1	9 April 2021	Communications and Engagement	Updated into new template and amended titles and departments

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Sponsorship Procedure		
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## 1. Related Policy

This Procedure relates to the policy pertaining to representing the City of Ryde through social media.

## 2. Context

The utilisation of social media on behalf of the City of Ryde should only be made as part of a broader communications / community engagement plan. If you have not developed a communication or community engagement plan, please contact the Manager Communications and Engagement.

## 3. Purpose

This Procedure details how staff can obtain authority to represent the City of Ryde on social media and the manner they should conduct themselves whilst doing so.

This Procedure applies to all City of Ryde staff who wish to utilise social media in an official and professional capacity and represent Council on social media channels.

## 4. Definitions

<b>Social Media</b>	<p>Where the term Social Media is used in this document it will refer to digital and online spaces where content can be added, posted or uploaded by people. These may include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- blogs and vlogs</li> <li>- bulletin boards</li> <li>- forums and discussion boards</li> <li>- instant messaging applications</li> <li>- microblogging platforms</li> <li>- online encyclopedias</li> <li>- platforms which allow public comment</li> <li>- podcasts</li> <li>- social networking sites</li> <li>- text and picture messaging</li> </ul>
<b>Authorised Representative</b>	<p>A staff member that has been granted authority to represent the City of Ryde on social media. Authorised Representatives should remember that their authority to represent applies only within the boundaries of their approval.</p>
<b>Communications Plan</b>	<p>A plan outlining how Council will convey information to the public and other interested parties.</p>

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<b>Community Engagement Plan</b>	A plan outlining how Council will engage with and seek participation from members of the public.
<b>Platform/Channel</b>	A term to describe the range and types of social media websites and applications.
<b>Social Media Policy</b>	Council's Policy on the use of social media.

## 5. Responsibilities

**All Staff** are responsible for:

- complying with the requirements of the Social Media Policy.

**Authorised Representatives** are responsible for:

- effectively representing the City of Ryde within the boundaries of their initial approval;
- not commenting on matters that they do not have approval to comment on;
- accurately responding to comments and questions posted on their platform;
- removing and responding to inappropriate or offensive material posted on their platform;
- ensuring that sufficient resources are available to monitor and moderate their platform during the hours that it is operational; and
- ensuring that timely responses are provided to comments and questions posted on the platform.

**Department Managers** are responsible for:

- approving staff requests for authority to represent the City of Ryde on social media
- articulating to their staff that are, or are seeking to become, authorised representatives, the subject matter that they are authorised to comment on; and
- ensuring that their Department's use of social media contributes to the effective delivery of their projects or accountabilities.

**Manager Communications and Engagement** is responsible for:

- providing advice and training to staff that are, or are seeking to become, Authorised Representatives;
- maintaining a register of Authorised Representatives;
- oversight of all communication activities across Council; and
- approving requests for authority to represent the City of Ryde on social media.

**Directors** are responsible for:

- approving requests for authority to represent the City of Ryde on social media.

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## 6. Obtaining Authority to represent the City of Ryde

The following section outlines how to request authority to represent the City of Ryde through social media. As outlined above, the decision to utilise social media on behalf of the City of Ryde should only be made as part of a broader communications / community engagement plan. If you have not developed a communication or community engagement plan please contact the Communications and Engagement Department.

If you have developed a communication or community engagement plan then you should have identified who your target audience is and what information you'd like to convey. The next step is to decide which social media platform(s) you intend to use and request access to social media on the City of Ryde network. To do this, complete *Form: Request to Access Social Media*. This form will need to be approved by both your Department Manager and your Director. At this stage your Department Manager and Director should be aware that you intend to request authority to represent the City of Ryde on social media.

Once you receive access to your selected platform(s) you should begin listening and observing conversation and interactions between existing users. Some important things to look out for:

- what is the general tone of the conversations? (i.e. Positive - friendly, supportive, communal or Negative - competitive, argumentative)
- who are the active and influential users?
- what is the general perception of Council?
- what is the general perception of your project / work?
- are media outlets active on the platform?

This listening phase should run for a minimum of one (1) month. Be sure to factor this period into your planning. During this time, you should be thinking about how you will resource your social media activities. Consider the following:

### Resourcing

- how many hours per week have you allocated to support your use of social media?
- will your use of social media be ongoing?
- what experience do you / your team have in social media, personally and professionally?

### Content

- how will you source content to post on your platform?
- how often will you post content on your platform?
- what internal approval will you require before you post content?
- what value will your presence add to existing conversations?

### Monitoring and Moderation

- how many hours per week have you allocated to support your use of social media?

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- who will be primarily responsible for generating content and responding to comments?
- who will be primarily responsible for removing and responding to inappropriate or offensive material?
- when will staff be available to monitor the platform and respond to comments / questions?
- how quickly do you anticipate you will be able to respond to comments / questions?
- what will be your criteria for inappropriate or offensive material?

Once you've completed your listening period you can request authority to represent the City of Ryde on social media by completing *Form: Request to Represent the City of Ryde on Social Media*. This form aims to identify your level of preparedness to undertake social media activities. When completing this form it is important to refer to your communication or community engagement plan. In completing this form, you should also be consulting your Department Manager and Director as they will need to decide on the limits of the subject matter that you are authorised to comment on.

Once the form is completed (and you have the support of your Department Manager and Director) it should be submitted to the Manager Communications and Engagement. At this stage your application will be assessed to ensure that you are properly prepared and that your activity aligns with Council's communications strategy. Once you have approval from the Manager Communications and Engagement you should obtain final approval from your Director.

## 7. Representing City of Ryde

Once you have been granted authority to represent the City of Ryde on social media, staff from Communications and Engagement will assist you to establish an organisational identity and get started on your chosen platform.

### How to Conduct Yourself

When representing the City of Ryde, remember that you are responsible for upholding a positive image of Council. Your conduct on social media is highly visible and in many cases there will be a permanent, publicly accessible record of everything that you have said and done. Always remember that whilst representing Council you are bound by the Code of Conduct, Council's Media Policy and the requirements of the Government Information (Public Access) Act, and that your conduct on and offline must be appropriate.

### Tone and Content

Selecting appropriate tone and content for your communication is an important part of engagement in social media. In the world of social media your voice will be just one amongst many, so aim to make both your tone and content engaging for other users. In many cases what is appropriate will depend on individual circumstances, but you should always try to follow these rules:

#### Tone

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- aim to be warm, friendly and engaging;
- do not use an authoritarian tone; and
- never get into an argument or a debate.

## Content

- post interesting and engaging content;
- avoid posting large blocks of text or information, break it down into small and clear components;
- social media is a two-way conversation, always be prepared to respond to comments and questions and keep the conversation going; and
- always remember the limits of your authority to comment.

## 8. Responding to Negative and Inappropriate or Offensive Comments

Maintaining a good level of engagement with your audience and other users is the best way to prevent negative or offensive comments from being made or posted on your platform.

However, even a well-managed social media presence will attract a share of detractors.

*Workflow: Social Media Management* outlines how to manage and respond to a variety of comment types.

Always remember when responding to negative and inappropriate or offensive comments to remain professional and appropriate. Stay calm, state the facts and avoid getting into an argument or debate. In many cases you may not win over the person making the comments, but you may convince those who are watching the interaction.

## 9. Review process and endorsement

- This policy is to be endorsed by the Executive Team and adopted by Council.
- This policy should be reviewed annually
- Edits to this policy such as titles, departments or directorate names, updates to legislation or branding updates are considered minor in nature and not required to be formally endorsed
- Substantial changes to this policy are to be endorsed by the Executive Team and adopted by Council.

## 10. Attachments

Title	CM Reference
Policy – Social Media	D13/48827
Form – Request to Access Social Media	D12/59935
Form – Request to Represent the City of Ryde on Social Media	D12/59936
Workflow – Social Media Managementp	D12/59940

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