

POLICY 046/2015 RAADSBELEID

SUBJECT/ONDERWERP: DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

REFERENCE/VERWYSING: 10.1.B

RESOLUTION NO/BESLUIT NR: 17.7/12/2015

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1. BACKGROUND

The remarkable growth in digital technology and the rise of social media platforms over the past years have changed the way in which people communicate and share information.

The use of social media tools in municipalities and around the globe has been gaining acceptance in all spheres of government. This also provides an opportunity for two-way communication between municipality and citizens, partners and stakeholders thereby increasing the frequency and speed of engagement.

All around the world, including South Africa, people are embracing digital technology to communicate.

While municipalities around the world may face some challenges in adopting social media tools, we are convinced that the potential benefits of using selected social media tools far outweigh any risks, and these benefits will continue to grow as more and more South Africans bridge the digital divide.

As public servants we have a unique opportunity to step out and be part of the digital revolution, joining a historical transition that allows conversations with the public, rather than simply communicating to them.

South African municipal employees have the same Constitutional rights of free of speech as other citizens when it comes to the use of, and participation in online social media platforms.

As public servants, however, municipal employees have some additional obligations when it comes to sustaining, building and defending the reputation of the municipality through social media.

2. PURPOSE

This guidelines serve to provide standards of professional practice and conduct when using interactive media, including LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, Google+, MySpace, etc (herein collectively referred to as “social media platforms”) Employees may choose to post information about //Khara Hais Municipality. When doing so this policy applies.

All employees should understand there is a legal responsibility involved while using social media platforms, employees may not post anything that could cause irreparable harm to the institution.

The policy establishes principles for:

- Municipal Councillors and employees using social media for official municipal communication purposes.
- Personal use of social media by municipal Councillors and employees

3. WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media includes services/mediums such as Facebook, YouTube, Google+, MySpace and LinkedIn.

Social media is the platforms that can be used by the general public using highly accessible digital technologies such as blogs, podcasts, social networks, wikis, micro-blogs and message boards.

The following are some benefits to government of using social media:

- increasing municipalities access to its stakeholders;
- improving the accessibility of municipal communication;
- allowing municipalities to adjust or refocus communications quickly, where necessary;
- improving the long-term cost effectiveness of municipal communication;
- increasing the speed of constituent feedback and input;
- reducing municipalities' dependence on traditional media channels to communicate with constituents.

3.1 **Social media for official communication**

The same protocols as contained in the 'Media Policy' apply when acting as an official communicator regardless of talking to the media, speaking at conferences and meetings as well as social media.

3.1.1 **Keep postings legal and respectful**

Before engaging with a specific social media the terms of reference should be understood by the user.

Councillors and Employees may NOT engage in online communication that brings //Khara Hais Municipality into disrepute.

The //Khara Hais Municipality have an official website in accordance with Section 21 (b) of the Municipal System Act at www.kharahais.gov.za which is updated only by the Communications Official - Technical, with the approval of the Municipal Manager.

3.1.2 **Comply with the communications strategy**

Only authorized communicators or duly delegated Councillors and employees may provide comment to the media on Municipal-related issues.

3.1.3 **Keep confidential information confidential**

Municipal Councillors and employees may not use personal social media platforms to post any confidential or proprietary information of the Municipality. All employees should sign oaths of confidentiality which applies to the clause.

//Khara Hais Municipality will not defend any Councillor or employee in any legal action on any commentary on social media platforms if that Councillor or employee were not delegated to act as Communications Officer in terms of the Media Policy and was not given permission for such comments.

The municipality is committed to ensure that all employees participate in social media platforms in a right way.

4. WHEN USING ANY KIND OF SOCIAL MEDIA, THE EMPLOYEE OR COUNCILLOR MUST:

- Be credible, accurate, fair, thorough and transparent.
- Be respectful, encourage constructive criticism and deliberation.
- Be cordial, honest and professional at all times.
- Before entering into any conversation, the user must evaluate the following:
 - Who is the potential audience?
 - Is there a good reason to place comment or respond?

5. CONCLUSION

Social media tools present opportunities for collaborative government but implementing these tools in Municipalities comes with unique challenges.

As a local municipality we should increase ways and means to enable greater public engagement. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Google+ and Twitter provide municipalities with attractive options for meeting these new objectives.

This policy serves as the first step in ensuring uniformity for using as a communication tool. It also serves as an enabler for responsibly and effectively leveraging social media tools.

6. **RELEVANT POLICIES**

Media Policy.
Disciplinary Code.