



POLICY 017/2024 RAADSBELEID

ONDERWERP: SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

VERWYSING: 10.1.B

BESLUIT NR: 18.3/10/2024

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

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

2. PURPOSE

These 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”) Councillors and Employees may choose to post information about Dawid Kruiper Municipality. When doing so this policy applies.

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

The policy establishes principles for:

- ☐ Municipal Councillors and employees using social media for official municipal communication purposes.
- ☐ Commenting in their personal capacity on municipal matters while still being employed by the municipality and while still serving as a councillor.

3. WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA

The major social media platforms (at the moment) are Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, X, LinkedIn, Pinterest, YouTube, and Snapchat.

Facebook is the largest social media platform at nearly 3 billion people using it monthly.

The Municipal WhatsApp group is subjected to the social media policy. All the recipients of a municipal phone are obliged to be part of the municipal WhatsApp group and other as determined by their Directors.

All Social Media postings of the Councillors must be approved by the Speaker and they can be recalled if they are not in-line with the Social Media Policy of the Council.

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 of the social media benefits to the municipality:

- ☐ increasing the municipality's 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 because traditional media sometimes take time to reach the people/audience

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 the Dawid Kruiper Municipality into disrepute.

The Dawid Kruiper Municipality has an official website which is in accordance with Section 21 (b) of the Municipal System Act at www.dawidkruiper.gov.za which is updated only by the Communications unit, with the approval of the Municipal Manager.

3.1.2 Compliance with the media policy

Only the Communications Head/Manager, the staff of Communications in consultation with the Head/Manager of Communications or duly delegated Councillors and employees may provide comment to the media on Municipal-related issues. This responsibility can be extended to other officials with the approval of the Municipal Manager or his delegated person.

3.1.3 Keep confidential information confidential

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

The Dawid Kruiper municipality will not defend any Councillor or employee in any legal action on any commentary on social media platforms if that Councillor or employee was not delegated to act in terms of the Media Policy and was not given permission for such comments.

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

3.1.4 Be careful when commenting

Municipal councillors and officials should not use social media in order to promote racism, xenophobia, war, sexism, pornography, anti-semitism, ethnitism or anything which is in breach of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

Comments include anything which can bring the municipality into disrepute whether on duty or not.

The comments should not cause damage to the image of the municipality

The comments should not cause financial damage to the municipality

The comments should not tarnish the image of the municipality in the public, residents, stakeholders and other government entities

3.2.5 WhatsApp groups

- All the municipal WhatsApp groups should be created/established with the approval of the Municipal Manager
- The Directors should make a written application for the establishment of a WhatsApp group of his/her Directorate, Departments of sections of his/her Directorate
- D.K.M WhatsApp groups should solely be used for official purposes

- A WhatsApp group ceases to exist after it was used for a specific programme, event or activity
- The admin of the WhatsApp group should be the Director of the Directorate which is requesting such a group
- The Municipal Manager reserves the right to be briefed on the activities of a WhatsApp group
- The Municipal Manager reserves the right to close a WhatsApp group or ask for it to be closed if that particular WhatsApp group does not comply with the Social media policy.

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?
- How will such a comment/s benefit or affect the municipality?

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 X provide municipalities with attractive options for meeting these new objectives.

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

6. RELEVANT POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

- Dawid Kruiper Media Policy.
- Dawid Kruiper Disciplinary Code.
- Promotion of Access to Information, act 2 of 2000
- Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000
- Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998
- Municipal Finance Management Act 50 of 2003
- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

7. ROLLES

- Speaker
- Executive Mayor
- Municipal Manager
- All Directors
- Manager of Communications
- All Employees