



Communications Policy, Media Policy and Social Media Policy

Name:	Communications Policy, Media Policy and Social Media Policy
Purpose:	These policies provide guidance and ensure that the required standards are met by Council staff regarding internal and external communications
Applies to:	All employees
Approved by:	Chief Executive Officer
Responsible for its Updating	Executive Office/Communications Officer
Final Approval by:	Chief Executive Officer
First Issued:	1 April 2023
Review period:	Every 3 years

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

1. COMMUNICATIONS POLICY	3
Responsibility	3
Verbal communications	3
Website	3
Council Brand / Logo	4
Council Newsletter	4
Events, Presentations and Signage	4
2. MEDIA POLICY	5
Media Principles	5
Responsibility	5
Media Relations	6
Management Communications on Operational Matters	6
3. SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY	7
Social Media Principles for Staff	7
Customer Use/ Commenting Policy	7

1. COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

This policy applies to mandatory and discretionary communications, communications in the Council's own publications, the news media at large (print, radio, television, online), Council- funded advertisements, and other forms of publicity, electronic (website, social media and email) and hard copy publication. Examples of communications include pamphlets/flyers, posters, radio (advertisements, notices, interviews), newspaper (advertisements, advertorial, column), Council newsletters, media releases and media conferences, educational material, speeches and presentations, website and social media channels.

Consultation is addressed in the Kaikōura District Council Significance and Engagement Policy.

Communication Principles

In all communications, Kaikōura District Council will apply the highest possible standards, taking into account the following:

- All communications will be clear, simple and accessible
- Formal, mandatory communications will comply with all statutory obligations
- All communications will express fair, unbiased and politically-neutral information
- All communications will be accurate and complete, based on substantiated facts and expressed consistently with those facts so the target audience may make a full and proper assessment of the subject matter
- When appropriate the communication must be attractive to the audience to ensure it can effectively achieve its desired purpose
- Communication resources (financial and staff resources) must be applied effectively and efficiently and for legitimate reasons
- Communication activity and channels will be selected based on their effectiveness in achieving the communication goals, and Council will not favour or endorse any specific channel or provider over others (for example, Council will not offer exclusivity to any member of the media).

Responsibility

Effective and efficient management for Council communications activities is the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer. Communication contains an element of risk. Where risk or the potential for risk is identified, staff, contractors or elected members should alert the Communications Officer and Chief Executive Officer to any matter likely to require professional advice. Quality control and editorial supervision are the ultimate responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer.

Verbal communications

Most Council communications are of a verbal nature including, providing advice to customers or colleagues or presenting information to the community. When engaging in verbal communication you must:

- Not be confrontational, aggressive or offensive
- Not offer personal opinion, unauthorised information, or information outside the scope of the designated role
- Remain impartial
- Listen and respect other viewpoints.

Website

The Council's website provides a valuable window to Council and is therefore subject to strict control. The following standards apply:

- Design and formatting is managed by the Communications Officer
- The Communications Officer can delegate departmental managers access to update their content
- Content must be accurate and kept up to date.

Council Brand / Logo

Use, placement and distribution of the Council logo must be authorised and only used for Council work purposes.

Council Newsletter

Council produces a regular newsletter (at least six per annum) to keep residents and ratepayers informed of Council activities. This is:

- Sent digitally by email to subscribers
- Available on the Latest News Page on the Council website
- Shared on social media by a Facebook post
- Formatted in line with Council's templates.

Council also produces a quarterly ratepayers newsletter which is distributed as an insertion in postal rates notices.

Events, Presentations and Signage

Communications in relation to events and presentations that promote Council are subject to the communications principles outlined in this policy. Guidance should be sought from the Communications Officer at the earliest stage of planning.

2. MEDIA POLICY

The media is a key outlet for communicating Council information to the public. It is important to remember that media do not operate for Council's convenience and the maintenance of good relationships are important.

Media Principles

- All media enquiries should be referred to the Communications Officer or Chief Executive Officer, who will co-ordinate the response and notify appropriate staff and elected members. This applies to contractors and service providers employed by the Council
- Staff and contractors are required to notify the Communications Officer or Chief Executive Officer of any approach by media
- Council staff may not speak to the media about Council matters unless authorised to do so
- Council staff may not provide any comment or information to the media with the intention of contesting or undermining Council policy or casting Council, Councillors or Council staff in a negative light
- Where accurate and complete answers cannot be facilitated immediately, or where a high degree of technical information is involved, or where there is reputational risk to Council, the media can reasonably be asked to wait for an agreed time and provide questions/requests in writing for clarity. Where significant administrative effort and collation is required consider referring the enquiry as a request under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA)
- Where there are potential liabilities or reputational risk identified, the Communications Officer will advise the Chief Executive Officer
- Requests for official information should ideally be made in writing (preferably by email), be clear and specific
- Key Council stakeholders, including the Mayor, Chief Executive Officer and elected members, will be kept informed of media approaches where appropriate
- All requests for photo or filming opportunities are to be discussed with the Communications Officer
- A Letter to the Editor is written as an official Council communication to inform the community about a particular matter. Such letters must be issued through the Communications Officer, subject to the approval of the Mayor and/or CE, or Senior Manager
- Media responses must reflect the collective view of Council and align with the communication principles
- An elected member must identify the capacity in which he/she is responding. (i.e. authorised council spokesperson or offering personal opinion) and follow the guidance in the Kaikōura District Council Code of Conduct in relation to media and social media.
- Council staff may speak to the media or write Letters to the Editor as private individuals with the following restrictions:
 - They do not comment on Council business or policy;
 - They are not identified as Council employees; and
 - Their comments are not perceived as representing the official Council position or policy
- All new Council employees are to be referred to the Council's Media Policy as part of staff induction.

Responsibility

The Communications Officer is responsible for coordinating information to support an official response. Media enquiries on decisions by Council or on issues under consideration by Council are referred to the Mayor in the first instance, thereafter the Deputy Mayor.

Media Relations

In the interests of providing ratepayers, residents and visitors with unbiased, politically-neutral and fair information Council will not favour or endorse any specific channel or provider over others.

- All press releases will be released to all members of the media at the same time
- If there is a need for an early release, then such releases may be embargoed but issued to all members of the media at the same time
- Council will not offer exclusivity to any member of the media, other than when a media organisation or representative requests information on a specific topic, the response will be provided back to that organisation or representative
- Council will not enter into negotiations with any member of the media at the exclusion of all others.

Management Communications on Operational Matters

Authority to communicate on behalf of the Management Team rests with the Chief Executive Officer. Authority is delegated to Senior Management and may be further delegated on a case-by-case basis.

3. SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Social Media includes the use of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and any other online platforms which enable views and information to be communicated within the public domain.

Facebook is Kaikōura District Council's primary social media channel. It is used as part of the communication mix to ensure the community is informed of Council services, work, activities and news. If you follow us, you can expect posts covering some of the following:

- Civil defence alerts
- Water notices etc
- Competitions
- Customer service reminders
- Invitations to have your say
- News and events.
- Key decisions or outcomes.

Comments & Questions

Members of the public are welcome to comment on Kaikōura District Council social media posts. We ask that users be respectful, and their comments are relevant to the topic of the post. We reserve the right to remove comments which are irrelevant, disrespectful, rude, abusive, or considered spam.

Members of the public are also welcome to ask questions relating to post content. Questions should be forwarded to our Customer Services Team by email to kdc@kaikoura.govt.nz or by mail or in person to 96 West End, Kaikōura, 7300. Facebook Messenger and comments are not monitored by our Customer Service team and therefore to ensure your question is not missed or overlooked by staff, we recommend that you send an email to kdc@kaikoura.govt.nz or fill in an online enquiry form at <https://www.kaikoura.govt.nz/council/contact-us> with your question or customer service request.

Kaikōura District Council will not monitor nor respond to comments or questions on third party social media accounts.

Kaikōura District Council typically posts during office hours on Monday – Friday, however some posts are set to auto post and, where required, Council staff may update the community at weekends or in evenings.

Social Media Principles for Staff

When using online communications in a professional or personal capacity, and that use associates you with your role at Council, ensure that you:

- Are authorised to make comments on behalf of Council
- Don't disclose information unless you are authorised to do so, or unless it is already in the public domain
- Be aware of laws covering libel, defamation, privacy and the protection of intellectual property
- Avoid any comment that might be interpreted as an official statement on behalf of Kaikōura District Council or that might compromise perceptions of your ability to do your job
- Avoid any statement or comment that might bring Council into disrepute
- Be aware that by identifying yourself as an employee of Council you are creating perceptions about Council and therefore you should ensure all content is professional and consistent with Council's communication principles.

Customer Use/ Commenting Policy

Please be aware that when engaging with the Kaikōura District Council over social media (or commenting), you are agreeing to the following:

- All comments will be monitored by the social media platform itself and Kaikōura District Council. Any comments that are offensive or inappropriate will be removed. (This includes offensive language, slander, threats to safety, personal attacks on staff, inappropriate content and cultural insensitivity)
- Personal attacks of any kind or offensive comments that target or disparage any ethnic, racial, age, or religious group, gender, sexual orientation or disability status are prohibited
- The use of obscene, threatening or harassing language is prohibited
- Comments advocating illegal activity or posting of material that violates copyrights or trademarks of others are prohibited
- Kaikōura District Council shares information, images and video with the public through external social media websites. Comments made by the public to these sites are reviewed and, while comments will not be edited by Council personnel, a comment may be deleted if it violates the policy described here
- Comments should be related to the posted topic for the Council's social media page or post. Kaikōura District Council social media accounts are not meant for comments that do not directly relate to the purpose or topic of the social media post.
- Kaikōura District Council social media channels are not open to comments promoting or opposing any person campaigning for election to a political office, or promotion or advertisement of a business or commercial transaction
- If you find any inappropriate comments please report them
- People who persistently cause conflict or offence to others will be removed and blocked from our social media pages
- A Like, Share or other link posted by Kaikōura District Council should not be taken as a formal endorsement
- Requests for official information should ideally be made in writing (preferably by email), be clear and specific. If you have posted a request on social media, there is a risk that your request may not be received or may be overlooked by staff. Please ensure our staff are also made aware of these requests by raising with our Official Information team, preferably by email to officialinformation@kaikoura.govt.nz or by post or in person at 96 West End, Kaikōura, 7300.
- This comment policy is subject to amendment or modification at any time.

For more information, please contact us on phone (03) 319 5026 or email kdc@kaikoura.govt.nz