

## Crewe Town Board social media procedures and protocols

**Administration rights** – These are held by the college and CEC communications team

**Schedule of content** – A monthly schedule of content will be prepared by Cheshire College - South & West with input from the comms and engagement sub group (via monthly meetings) and shared at least one week before the first post goes live. The sub group has a collective responsibility to review the schedule of content and to raise any issues with the college comms contact.

**Sharing of positive news** – As referenced in the communications strategy, key opportunities for positive communications and engagement activity should be identified by the board and comms sub group as the project progresses and incorporated into the timeline of planned activity. In doing so, the board's social media channels should be considered as a key channel for this.

**Interaction with posters** – Great communication is two-way and having active social media accounts, where we interact with our audience in a positive way, is to be encouraged. However, care should be taken in regard to the tone and messaging used and care needs to be given to understand 'who' we are responding to.

**Imagery** – Imagery used should reflect the Crewe brand and seek to reflect the town in a positive light.

**Tone** – The content of the social media posts should reflect the Crewe brand.

**Comments that need action** – This refers to comments where a question has been asked, for example, about the board's remit or status of the TIP. In such instances, the poster should be referred to the board's website or, if appropriate and depending on the question, given the contact email address if it requires a more detailed response.

If the comment relates to a specific organisation, these should be forwarded by email to the relevant person to deem the action required, in collaboration with the communications subgroup.

**Misinformation** – Themes of misinformation or specific comments should be referred to the sub group where a decision can be taken collectively as to the response required.

**Offensive comments** – Crewe Town Board takes the issue of abuse via social media seriously. With any abusive or offensive social media posts or tweets there are four main options:

- Ignore the post;
- Reply directly to the post (not usually recommended as it tends to encourage those who are posting);
- Use the post to inform communications activity to divert attention away from the conversation/post;
- Report the post as offensive; and
- For **Facebook specifically**, the post can be hidden.

Admins of the board's social media accounts can report 'threatening or abusive' social media behaviour to Twitter/Facebook with a view to getting the offending account locked, suspended or specific tweets deleted.

The board owes a duty of care to members who are the target of such abuse or 'trolling' as a result of their being a member of the board.

There are legal limits, however, as to the action the board may take, in the public interest, where freedom of expression is misused or abused and members unfairly targeted.

**Action to restrict what others may publish should be taken rarely and only after careful consideration of the public interest. When considering this matter the board should keep in mind the 'Spitting Image' test of the acceptable limits of political satire in British public life and the strong protection afforded to freedom of expression in a modern democracy.**

**Any action by the board must be 'necessary and proportionate.'**

**It is important to recognise that any attempt to remove offending material may spark negative publicity, with the board and its members criticised for attempting to 'stifle free speech' or silence critics.**

**It is also important to recognise that any action taken may have the unintentional consequence of re-energising the offending 'poster' by showing that his/her toxic barbs have struck home, caused distress or, at the very least, elicited a reaction.**

### **Reporting abuse**

The board should not normally take any action to permanently block a person on social media or report the post unless the material is 'hateful' – in that it discriminates, or encourages discrimination, on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation (under the Equality Act 2010).

The board should not normally take any action unless a member is named in, or is easily identifiable from, the communication in question. The board should not normally take any action where the target is 'the board'.

Where a social media admin, in the course of their normal work, comes across a tweet that is potentially defamatory or clearly meets the criteria of 'abusive behaviour' against an identifiable individual board member, that individual will be informed.

At the individual's request, we will report the tweet to Twitter/Facebook – requesting that it be deleted. We would then update the individual board member regarding the result of that request.

- Specific guidance on abusive behaviour, as defined in Twitter rules and on Facebook, is available below and via these two links:

Twitter: [Twitter rules](#)

Facebook: [https://en-gb.facebook.com/help/1417189725200547/?helpref=hc\\_fnav](https://en-gb.facebook.com/help/1417189725200547/?helpref=hc_fnav)

OFFICIAL