



1.1.6 Elected Member Communication

Type:	Office of the CEO – Elected Members
Legislation:	Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007 State Records Act 2000 - SRC Standard 8 – Managing Digital Information State Records Office Guideline – Management of Digital Records
Delegation:	
Other Related Document:	Code of Conduct Policy 1.2.1

Objective

To establish protocols for the Town of East Fremantle official communications with our community to ensure the Town is professionally and accurately represented, to maximise a positive public perception and response to the Town.

Policy Scope

This policy applies to:

1. communications initiated or responded to by the Town of East Fremantle with our community; and
2. elected members when making comment in either their Town role or in a personal capacity.

Policy Statement

1. Official Communications

The purposes of Town’s official communications include:

- sharing information required by law to be publicly available.
- sharing information that is of interest and benefit to the Community.
- promoting the Town of East Fremantle events and services.
- promoting Public Notices and community consultation / engagement opportunities.
- answering questions and responding to requests for information relevant to the role of the Town.
- receiving and responding to community feedback, ideas, comments, compliments and complaints.

The Town of East Fremantle’s official communications will be consistent with relevant legislation, policies, standards and the positions adopted by the Council. Our communications will always be respectful and professional.

The Town of East Fremantle will use a combination of different communication modes to suit the type of information to be communicated and the requirements of the community or specific audience, including:

- website;
- advertising and promotional materials;
- media releases prepared for the Mayor, to promote specific Town of East Fremantle positions;
- social media; and
- community newsletters, letter drops and other modes of communications undertaken by the Town's Administration at the discretion of the CEO.

2. Speaking on behalf of the Town of East Fremantle

The Mayor is the official spokesperson for the Town and may represent the Town of East Fremantle and may represent the Town in official communications, including; speeches, comment, print, electronic and social media. [s.2.8(1)(d) of the *Local Government Act 1995*]

Where the Mayor is unavailable, the Deputy Mayor may act as the spokesperson.
[s.2.9 and s.5.34 of the *Local Government Act 1995*]

The CEO may speak on behalf of the Town, where authorised to do so by the Mayor.
[s.5.41(f) of the *Local Government Act 1995*]

The provisions of the *Local Government Act 1995* essentially direct that only the Mayor, or the CEO if authorised, may speak on behalf of the Local Government. It is respectful and courteous to the office of Mayor to refrain from commenting publicly, particularly on recent decisions or contemporary issues, until such time as the Mayor has had opportunity to speak on behalf of the Town.

Communications by Elected Members, whether undertaken in an authorised official capacity or as a personal communication, must not:

- bring the Town into disrepute;
- compromise the person's effectiveness in their role with the Town;
- imply the Town's endorsement of personal views;
- imply the Elected Member is speaking on behalf of the Town, unless authorised to do so; or
- disclose, without authorisation, confidential information.

Social media accounts or unsecured website forums must not be used to transact meetings which relate to the official business of the Town.

Elected member communications must comply with the Code of Conduct and the *Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007*.

3. Responding to Media Enquiries, Developing Media Statements, Press Releases

All enquiries from the Media for an official Town of East Fremantle comment, whether made to an individual Elected Member or Employee, must be directed to the CEO or a person authorised by the CEO. Information will be coordinated to support the Mayor or CEO (where authorised) to make an official response on behalf of the Town.

Elected Members may make comments to the media in a personal capacity – refer to clause 7.1 below.

4. Website

The Town of East Fremantle will maintain an official website, as our community's on-line resource to access to the Town's official communications.

5. Social Media

The Town of East Fremantle uses Social Media to facilitate interactive information sharing and to provide responsive feedback to our community. Social Media will not however, be used by the Town to communicate or respond to matters that are complex or relate to a person's or entity's private affairs.

The Town of East Fremantle currently maintains the following Social Media accounts:

- Facebook

The Town of East Fremantle may also post and contribute to Social Media hosted by others, so as to ensure that the Town's strategic objectives are appropriately represented and promoted.

The Town of East Fremantle actively seeks ideas, questions and feedback from our community however, we expect participants to behave in a respectful manner. The Town will moderate its Social Media accounts to address and where necessary delete content deemed to be:

- offensive, abusive, defamatory, inaccurate, false or misleading;
- promotional, soliciting or commercial in nature;
- unlawful or incites others to break the law;
- information which may compromise individual or community safety or security;
- repetitive material copied and pasted or duplicated;
- content that promotes or opposes any person campaigning for election to the Council, appointment to official office, or any ballot;
- content that violates intellectual property rights or the legal ownership of interests or another party; and
- any other inappropriate content or comments at the discretion of the Town of East Fremantle.

Where a third party contributor to the Town's social media account is identified as posting content which is deleted in accordance with the above, the Town may at its complete discretion block that contributor for a specific period of time or permanently.

Social Media is not an official forum for providing detailed responses to comments posted on the Town of East Fremantle social media platforms and where appropriate the Town's facebook administrator may use the following statement if a comment or query comes from a member of the public via social media:

"Hi <<name>>, thank you for connecting with us on Facebook. We are unable to action requests via Social Media - please email your message to admin@eastfremantle.wa.gov.au. Thank you for your kind attention. "

5.1 Use of Social Media in Emergency Management and Response

The Town will use the following Social Media accounts to communicate and advise our community regarding Emergency Management:

- Facebook
- Website

6. Record Keeping and Freedom of Information

Official communications undertaken on behalf of the Town of East Fremantle, including on the Town's Social Media accounts and third party social media accounts must be created and retained as local government records in accordance with the Town's Record Keeping Plan and the *State Records Act 2000*. These records are also subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

Elected Member communications that relate to their role as an Elected Member are subject to the requirements of the Town's Record Keeping Plan and the *State Records Act 2000*. Elected Members are responsible for transferring these records to the Town's administration. Elected Member records are also subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

7. Personal Communications

Personal communications and statements made privately; in conversation, written, recorded emailed, texted or posted in personal social media, have the potential to be made public, whether intended or not.

On the basis that personal or private communications may be shared or become public at some point in the future, Elected Members should ensure that their personal or private communications do not breach the requirements of this policy, the Code of Conduct and the *Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007*.

7.1 Elected Member Statements on Town Matters

An Elected Member may choose to make a personal statement publicly on a matter related to the business of the Town of East Fremantle.

Any public statement made by an Elected Member, whether made in a personal capacity or in their Local Government representative capacity, must:

- clearly state that the comment or content is a personal view only, which does not necessarily represent the views of the Town of East Fremantle.
- be made with reasonable care and diligence;
- be lawful, including avoiding contravention of; copyright, defamation, discrimination or harassment laws;
- be factually correct;
- avoid damage to the reputation of the local government;
- not reflect adversely on a decision of the Council;
- not reflect adversely on the character or actions of another Elected Member or Employee;
- maintain a respectful and positive tone and not use offensive or objectionable expressions in reference to any Elected Member, Employee or community member.

An Elected Member who is approached by the media for a personal statement may request the assistance of the CEO.

Comments which become public and which breach this policy, the Code of Conduct or the *Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007*, may constitute a minor breach of the *Local Government Act 1995* and may be referred for investigation.

Responsible Directorate:	Office of the Chief Executive Officer
Reviewing Officer:	Chief Executive Officer
Decision making Authority:	Council
Policy Adopted:	20/11/18
Policy Amended/Reviewed:	17/9/19
Former Policy No:	4.4.4