

Blouberg Municipality



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

STATUS: As adopted on the 29 May 2025

VISION

"A participatory municipality that turns prevailing challenges into opportunities for growth and development through optimal utilization of available resources"

MISSION

"To ensure delivery of quality services through community participation and creation of an enabling environment for economic growth and job creation"

MOTTO

Kodumela moepa thutse which translates "Perseverance is the mother of success"

VALUES

Transparency

Diligence

Honesty

Reliability

ICONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA



Facebook



Twitter



Twitter



LinkedIn



Google+



MySpace



Tumblr



Bebo



Foursquare



Delicious



Digg



StumbleUpon



Reddit



Technorati



Slashdot



Share this



YouTube



Flickr



Instagram



Pinterest



Deviant Art



SoundCloud



Vimeo



Twylah



RSS



Skype

1. BACKGROUND

The South African Government has over the years become notorious for being reactive communicators. This is especially prevalent at the Local Government level, where Municipalities in particular, are more often than not riddled with service delivery protests.

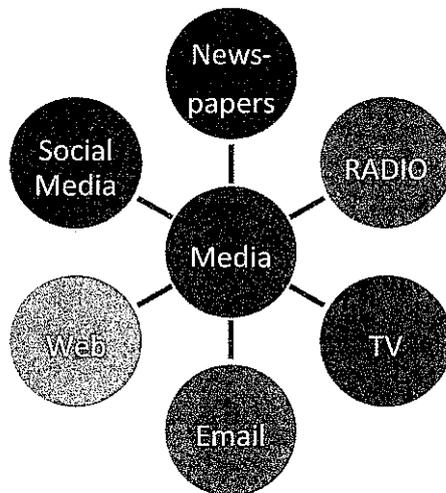
These protests are at times attributed to miscommunication or even a general lack of information sharing. It is for this reason that Government Communicators need to understand the strategic importance of communication in preventing these protests which are a huge burden on South African needy communities.

Social Media has gained widespread acceptance in most spheres of government worldwide as it provides an opportunity for speedy two way communication between government and the electorate, reducing the red-tape bureaucracy which is usually associated with mainstream communication in government.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Government Communication is developmental in its nature, as the primary goal of it is empowering communities through information/communication. Government needs to constantly devise creative approaches to communication as opposed to mainstream communication channels, in order to reach all sectors of the economy.

The diversity of Government stakeholders/target audiences (council, administration, public, activist groups, big business, government, NGO/CBO, Media, institute of higher learning, etc.) dictate that one blanket approach to communication would be ineffective. There is a need to devise the most effective means of communication for each stakeholder group and to maximise communication in order to uphold, cleanse and promote Government reputation. The face of media as it was previously known has evolved. Mainstream media is no longer the only source of media as can be seen in this diagram:



3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- 3.1. Section 32 of the **Constitution of the Republic Of South Africa** (1996) accords everyone the right to have access to any information held by the state;
- 3.2. The pre 1994 apartheid led government was secretive in nature and years after the first democratically elected government took office, the **Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 Of 2000** (PAIA) was developed in order to promote sharing of information, and fulfil wishes enshrined in the Constitution;
- 3.3. Principle 8 of the **King Report on Good Governance for South Africa** 2009 (King III), is dedicated to stakeholder management and how this directly affects an organisation's reputation;
- 3.4. **Local Government Municipal Systems Act, No. 32 of 2000**, Chapter 4 obliges municipalities to promote community participation in the affairs of every municipality; and
- 3.5. **GCIS Social Media Policy Guide.**

4. SOCIAL MEDIA

"Social Media is one of the platforms which can be used by the general public using highly accessible digital technologies like social networks, blogs, and podcasts amongst others, which have made communication more accessible to people as messages are transmitted in real time."

For the last decade, social media has sent a strong buzz worldwide, through the advent of social media we have come to live in what Marshall McLuhan foresaw as the "global village."

Social Networks are supposed to promote dialogue, but some municipalities tend not to take into account that social interaction is the main purpose of social networking, they tend to restrict the tool so interaction is only outward, and so it appears as though they are looking for another way of distributing their information.

5. THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

(a) Social media is of critical importance in communicating directly with the community and sharing the Municipality's information and listening to the communities and is ideal in :

- (i) Promoting responsiveness, openness and mutual respect;
- (ii) Connecting the Municipality with the communities it serves in a cost-effective way that promotes good relationships;
- (iii) Strengthening local government and civil society;
- (iv) Improving information on service delivery progress;
- (v) Improving relationships between Municipality and key sectors of the community;
- (vi) Providing real time interaction; and (vii) Promoting Corporate Identity.

6. Status of Mainstream Social Media Usage

There is a variety of social media platforms which are used to engage the public that BLM is already using, Facebook and Twitter. This is considering the demographics of the Municipality.

6.1. Facebook

BLM currently has a Facebook Page(Blouberg Local Municipality) with more than 15 000 followers and a Facebook Account (Blouberg Municipality) with over 12 000 followers administered by the Communications Unit. The process of answering questions is the same as the one stipulated in the Communication Strategy: answering and asking the relevant department and then typing answers on the comments. Posting onto the page is done as frequently as possible, however at least once a week. Content shared is about events, departmental collaborations, awareness campaigns, links on stories, vacancies and , tenders.

6.2. Twitter

BLM currently has a twitter account(@BLOUBERGMUNICIP) which has over 200 followers. Some people have a better appreciation of Twitter as a social media platform, because they associate with its relevance. So this is catering for people who are not on Facebook, and a lot of dialogue happens more on this platform.

7. PURPOSE

(a) The purpose of this Social Media Policy is to govern the use of social media sites in order to promote the communication agenda of Blouberg Local Municipality (BLM), while protecting and promoting the Municipality's image. (b)

The primary goals of the using social media shall be as follows:

- (i) To increase awareness of Municipal programmes, projects and developments;
- (ii) Complement the existing communication methods and processes;
- (iii) Provide an additional platform through which BLM keeps abreast with general public comments and perceptions regarding the Municipality, which will assist as a form of environmental scanning;
- (iv) Disseminate urgent information quickly;
- (v) Correct misinformation, remedy mistakes or alter services to build strong relationships.
- (vi) Provide another method by which stakeholders can engage with the municipality; and
- (vii) Use social media as another way to collaborate with the public, business and other municipalities on mutually beneficial programmes and initiatives.

8. SCOPE

- (a) This policy shall apply to social media use for Officials and Councillors who already have social media accounts and those intending to have.
- (b) It shall apply to all BLM Officials and Councillors who are followers of information on the Municipalities social media sites and communications section which is an official unit uploading information.
- (c) Communication through social media shall comply with all other relevant municipal policies, procedures and guidelines, such as Communications Strategy; Code of Conduct; and ICT policies.

9. RESPONSIBILITIES

8.1. Municipal Manager

- a) As the Accounting Officer reporting to the Mayor who is a Chief Information Officer, s/he shall direct compliance in terms of the Social Media Policy.

8.2. Municipal Manager

- a) Shall monitor the policy and accompanying procedures
- b) Shall monitor the content and flow of information

8.3. Communications Manager (with the support of Communications Officer)

- (a) Monitor the Policy and accompanying procedures if any;
- (b) Provides training and guidance to personnel and initiates document review;
- (c) Will review the policy once a year from date of adoption;
- (d) Approves and oversees social media sites and tools for official corporate use;
- (e) Ensures consistency of messaging and imaging for all corporate social media sites, to avoid confusion and miscommunication;
- (f) Oversees all social media site accounts including their creation and destruction; and
- (g) Maintains a list of site domain names and social media accounts including login and password information.

8.4. Communications officials

- (a) The Manager shall be responsible to capture stories and upload them on social media platforms
- (b) Communications Officer shall also be responsible to capture stories and photos and upload them on social media platforms

8.5. Departments

- (a) Municipal departments shall submit approved content they require posted on social media platforms to the Communication Unit through events stories and meeting resolutions.
- (b) The Communications Unit shall be responsible for ensuring that content on all social media platforms is updated and relevant at all times.
- (c) The Communication Unit shall be expected to respond to positive or negative developments from engagement via their social media accounts on the respective social media platforms, where and if applicable.
- (d) It shall also be responsible for the monitoring and reporting of the respective social media accounts.
- (e) The Communication Unit shall update stories of events and any development happening in the municipality

9. GOVERNING RULES AND REGULATIONS

9.1. General

- (a) The Municipality's website, www.blouberg.gov.za shall remain its primary online source of information.
- (b) No confidential information shall be posted onto any social media under any circumstance.
- (c) Relevant queries on basic services shall be channelled to the Municipality' hotline call centre and responses shall be uploaded on social media.
- (d) Comments not topically related shall not be entertained.
- (e) Profane language and content shall not be tolerated and shall be removed immediately.
- (f) Content that promotes discrimination on the basis of race, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability and sexual orientation shall not be allowed;
- (g) Sexual content or links to sexual content shall not be tolerated and will be removed;
- (h) Content related to non-municipal related advertising or promotions (commercial advertising) shall be blocked;
- (i) Content for the purposes of promoting a candidate for municipal, provincial or national election shall also not be published.

9.2. Appropriate content for municipal representatives

- (a) No employee or Councillor of the municipality shall be permitted to share the following:
 - (i) Any content that is unlawful, defamatory, racist, sexist, homophobic or insulting;
 - (ii) Anything that is untrue by the municipality;
 - (iii) Any content that features explicit political messages or branding;

- (iv) Content which is harassing, threatening, obscene, pornographic, indecent, lewd, foul language, suggestive or otherwise objectionable;
 - (v) Content that criticises individual community members, colleagues, Councillors by name;
 - (vi) Content which infringes the privacy of others;
 - (vii) Content that is the property of someone else, without permission to use it; and
 - (viii) Spam (unsolicited sales messages). The same applies to content posted by members of the public on municipal platforms;
- (b) If any comment by a member of the public contravenes these rules, the municipality reserves the right to delete it, block the individual from its page and report the message. Comments that are critical of the Municipality or its officials shall be allowed to stand, provided they do not contravene any of the rules outlined above. Accusations will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

9.3. Content Neutrality

- (a) All content shall not discriminate in any way and must not be seen to be biased.
- (b) It shall be the Municipality's responsibility to remain impartial yet informative when communicating with the public about political matters.
- (c) The Municipality shall not to share political opinions of any office bearers on any of the Municipality's social media platforms. However official statements made by office bearers which can be published on the Municipality's website can be shared on social media platforms.
- (d) The Municipality shall not share content of a party political nature.
- (e) Office bearers shall use their personal accounts to publish party political statements.

9.4. Confidentiality

- (a) It is critical that any information shared on the various social media platforms shall not be sensitive or confidential in any way.
- (b) Municipal employees shall refer to internal departmental policies and guidelines on what is considered confidential information, and ensure that these policies and guidelines are enforced on social media.
- (c) Use of devices in mayoral, portfolio and council meetings shall be avoided as this leaks the information prior to decision making.
- (d) In the above mentioned event, anyone who intends to share proceedings to social media platforms undertakes to inform all present of their plan to do so.

9.5. Personal social media accounts

- (a) Where Municipal employees use social media platforms and wish to provide personal comments on platforms, they shall do so by not contravening the Code of Conduct and bring the public service into disrepute or be misinterpreted as being an official representative of the Blouberg Local Municipality.

- (b) All employees shall adhere to the municipality's Code of Conduct at all times and remain neutral.
- (c) Any personal social media accounts, or accounts unrelated to the BLM, that currently exist or shall be created in future, are not to be registered using an email address. This applies to any social media platform that requires an e-mail account to register. These accounts must make use of private e-mail addresses and contact details.
- (d) Officials shall not use municipal-related usernames or handles when using or setting up their personal accounts, e.g. Communications Manager Lerato or Cllr Matome .

9.4. Principles to remember at all times

- (a) If Communicators are unsure about what or how to post, they can contact the office of the Municipal Manager to get a go ahead on the suggested content.
- (b) Employees shall keep their professionalism, while not losing the personal touch.
- (c) Employees shall obtain permission before sharing personal details on municipal related social platforms. This applies to photographs as well.
- (d) All posts shall be relevant to the community being served by the BLM
- (e) All response to public comments shall be directed by the authorised personnel on the social media.

10. SOCIAL MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT

10.4. Employees

- (a) Nothing about social media changes the responsibilities and obligations of employees or contractors or interns of the Blouberg Local Municipality.
- (b) It does not matter if employees or contractors or interns use a private account or access social media outside of work hours – their obligations in terms of their contract of employment, the Code of Conduct, and all other applicable policies apply to all of their conduct on social media.
- (c) Employees or contractors or interns of the BLM have a legal duty to act in good faith towards the Municipality.
- (d) They shall not do anything that damages or tarnishes the reputation of the BLM and shall always act in the best interests of the organisation.
- (e) This duty extends to their use of social media. For example, employees shall not comment negatively on social media about anything associated with the BLM.
- (f) Everything employees do and say on social media reflects on the BLM and its reputation.
- (g) In conducting themselves on social media, it is important that employees use sound judgment and common sense, act with professionalism and integrity, and adhere to the Municipality's values.

- (h) Employees who violate any terms set out in this policy shall be subjected to Disciplinary Processes.

10.5. Councillors

- (a) Everything Councillors do and say on BLM social media reflects on its reputation.
- (b) In conducting themselves on social media, it is important that Councillors use sound judgment and common sense, act with professionalism and integrity, and adhere to the Municipality's values.
- (c) Councillors shall restrict party political messages and campaigning on BLM social media.
- (d) BLM shall not share or endorse any political content on any of its social media platforms at any given time.
- (e) Councillors shall also refrain from divulging administrative information via the social media platform to the general public, if the matter is still in the process of completion and not yet finalised. This type of information shall first be clarified and verified with the Municipal Manager then to Mayor before it can be made public.

11. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES

- (a) All employees using social media on behalf of the Municipality shall undergo relevant training before gaining access to any social media accounts.
- (b) It shall be the Municipality's responsibility to provide training to such employees.
- (c) This training shall be facilitated by communications sections using an accredited service provider.
- (d) Communicators shall be provided with the necessary tools in order to manage municipal social media accounts on mobile/smartphones tables.
- (e) These tools shall include: access to social media platforms; budget and/or cell phone allowance to manage municipal social media platforms remotely (i.e. airtime and/or data to manage social media via smartphone) as the need arises and the available budget permits.

12. CONTENT APPROVALS

The nature of social media means that responsiveness is vital. Therefore, it shall not be feasible to subject every post or response to comprehensive approval processes. However it is recommended that information being uploaded and responded on shall be verified, accurate and checked by the appropriate Directors/managers and Communications Manager, in order to ensure that the correct information reaches the public and to ensure that accountability is always being practiced by the responsible personnel.

Employees responsible for updating the social media accounts shall be empowered to respond appropriately, and to exercise good judgment in accordance with the social media code of conduct, mentioned above.

13. TRANSGRESSION

- a. Any action or behaviour by Councillors or members of staff, which is in conflict with this Policy, shall be deemed a transgression of the Code of Conduct of Councillors or Staff members, as the case may be.

14. POLICY REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed and be revised as and when it is necessary to do so.

BLM hopes that with this Policy, will find it easy to start managing social media networks in a more strategic and guided manner.

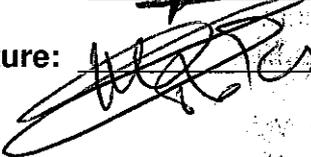
15. APPROVAL

POLICY APPROVAL

This policy was formulated by HR Management, and went through consultation in the Local Labour Forum.

Authorised by Municipal Manager: Signature:  Date: 29-05-2025

Recommended by Portfolio Committee
on Corporate Services: Signature:  Date: 29-05-2025

Approved by Municipal Council: Signature:  Date: 29-05-2025