



Attorney General's Guidance

Honorary Police - acceptable use of social media

- 1) This Guidance is issued by the Attorney General to all Honorary Police Officers to set out the responsibilities of Officers when using social media and making public statements.
- 2) Officers are reminded that inappropriate use of social media and public statements could bring discredit on the Honorary Police and could amount to a criminal offence or an offence against discipline.

Introduction

- 3) Social media can be a useful tool for the Honorary Police to communicate and engage with the public through official Honorary Police accounts. However, Officers need to be mindful of the use of their personal social media, which also communicates messages to the public, whether intentionally or inadvertently through Officers sharing their views, or the views of others, online.
- 4) Individuals have a right to freedom of speech; however certain limitations may be placed on these rights for Officers in order to protect the public and themselves.
- 5) This guidance aims to clarify the responsibilities of all Officers when using social media sites and provide a clear framework for acceptable behaviour online. The same standards of behaviour are expected of Officers online and offline and posting inappropriate or offensive material online could amount to a criminal offence or an offence against discipline under the Code.
- 6) It is important that Officers follow this guidance in respect of their personal social media accounts, as well as any official Honorary Police or Parish accounts. Information shared online will be seen, re-used and shared by the public. It is important to consider this when sharing content online as content can affect the public perception of the Honorary Police.

General Guidance

- 7) In accordance with paragraph 13 of the Code, whether on or off duty, Officers should not behave in a way which is likely to bring discredit upon the Honorary Police. The same standard of behaviour and conduct is expected of Officers offline and online.
- 8) Information posted on the Internet or social media can end up in the public domain, even if it was intended to be 'private' or is posted in a closed or private group. Officers should treat anything that they post online as if it will be seen by the general public and should consider the perception that may be given of the Honorary Police by the content.

- 9) The content of any posts online should adhere to the principles of the Code, in particular the following principles:
 - a) Honesty and Integrity (2)
 - b) Fairness and Impartiality (3)
 - c) Politeness and Tolerance (4)
 - d) Lawful orders, directives etc (7)
 - e) Confidentiality (8)
 - f) General conduct (13)
- 10) Officers should avoid using social media or making public statements off duty after consuming alcohol or when their judgment may be impaired for other reasons.

Fairness and Impartiality

- 11) The public expect the Honorary Police to conduct their duties with fairness and impartiality. Officers should refrain from any activity online that is likely to interfere with their ability to maintain fairness and impartiality, or that may give the impression to the public that they are not acting fairly and impartially.
- 12) Officers should refrain from making political statements on their social media or in public statements and should refrain from publicly affiliating themselves to a particular political stance or group. This includes retweeting, sharing or liking messages of a political nature as this could be considered as endorsing an originator's view. Making political statements could give the impression that Officers will not act fairly and impartially and will act in accordance with the political stance that they have chosen to adopt rather than in accordance with their duties as an Honorary Police Officer.
- 13) If Officers wish to put themselves forward for election to the States Assembly, they should notify the Chef de Police of the Parish in which the Officer serves prior to nominating themselves. The Chef de Police shall suspend the Officer's duties during the election period in order to uphold the requirements of the Code.

Politeness and Tolerance

- 14) In accordance with paragraph 4 of the Code, Officers should treat members of the public and colleagues with courtesy and respect, avoiding abusive or deriding attitudes or behaviour. This also applies to their conduct online, both when on duty and off duty.
- 15) Officers should not make offensive or degrading comments targeted at an individual or group online. They should also avoid public statements which demonstrate favouritism of an individual or group.
- 16) Any form of harassment, victimization or unreasonable discrimination will not be tolerated and will be treated as an offence against discipline and could amount to a criminal offence.

Confidentiality

- 17) Officers must not disclose any information obtained in the course of their official duties on social media or otherwise to the public.
- 18) How much information Officers share about themselves on social media is a personal decision. However, Officers are encouraged to limit the amount of personal information that they share in order to protect themselves and the Honorary Police force. I would recommend that Officers do not publish that they are a member of the Honorary Police on their social media pages.
- 19) Officers should not make any adverse comments in relation to their colleagues or the Honorary Police on social media or in public statements. Officers should use official channels to raise any concerns that they have.

General Conduct

- 20) Before posting any information on social media or making a public statement, Officers should consider the perception that the statement might give of the Honorary Police force.
- 21) The expression of views or conduct which appears to support discrimination against any group, or encourages racial, religious or homophobic hatred will not be tolerated and will be considered an offence against discipline and may amount to a criminal offence. This includes retweeting, sharing or liking messages of this nature as this could be considered as endorsing an originator's views

Please make full use of the Internet and social media but please do so responsibly.

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