
Subject:	SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR MEMBERS
Meeting and Date:	Governance Committee – 4th December 2014 Standards Committee – 17th December 2014 Council – 28 January 2015
Report of:	David Randall, Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer
Portfolio Holder:	Leader of the Council
Decision Type:	Council Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: To introduce a Social Media Policy for Members.

That it be recommended to the Governance and Standards Committees:

- (a) That they note the Social Media Policy for Members.
- (b) That they recommend to Council that the Social Media Policy for Members be approved and incorporated into the Council's Constitution.

That it be recommended to Council:

- (c) That the Social Media Policy for Members, be approved and be incorporated into the Council's Constitution.
 - (d) That the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer is authorised to make minor changes to the policy to reflect legislative changes.
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1. Summary

Social Media is technology that is now widely available and used, which allows online users to interact and share information (including video, audio, photographs, and text) publicly or privately with one another.

Social Media includes a variety of internet based communication tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs and wikis. The use of social media by individuals both inside and outside of the Council is now widespread and continues to proliferate.

Introducing a pragmatic social media policy, which defines acceptable and unacceptable is intended to help protect Members from allegations of breaching the Code of Conduct and to minimise risk to the authority.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 All Members of this authority have recently been issued with i-pads to assist them in conducting the business of the Council. In addition the recent Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 now allows members of the public to film, blog and record council meetings. With this comes increased scrutiny and an expectation that councillors act responsibly when engaging with and using social media.

- 2.2 In drafting this policy, it has been necessary to consider a number of factors. Firstly the Council's attitude towards social media, which is to encourage responsible use; secondly the nature of its use, in that we allow personal use of social media from Council i-pads and other Council equipment, but encourage members to set up distinct accounts to clearly separate personal use, from that use when acting as a councillor; and thirdly the environment where social media is used, which for members could be anywhere, but potentially has more public interest when attending Council meetings.

3. Identification of Options

- 3.1 Option 1: to adopt the Social Media Policy for Members at Appendix 1
- 3.2 Option 2: not to adopt the Social Media Policy for Members at Appendix
- 3.3 Option 3: adopt an amended policy

4. Evaluation of Options

- 4.1 The preferred option is Option 1. This Social Media Policy for Members has been developed from a short form policy available through Practical Law Employment. It is therefore based on the latest legislative framework and is compatible alongside the adopted Code of Conduct for Members.
- 4.2 Option 2 is not recommended, as this will leave the Council and Members without a clear policy and at risk from allegations of improper conduct.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 No additional resource implications.

6. Corporate Implications

- 6.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: Finance has been consulted and has nothing further to add. SB
- 6.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted during the preparation of this report and has no further comment to make.
- 6.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer:

This report does not specifically highlight any equalities implications however, in discharging their responsibilities members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15>

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Social Media Policy for Members

8. Background Papers

None

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