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## **SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLORS**

To: **Council – 24 April 2014**

By: **Justine Wingate, Corporate Information & Communications Manager**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **N/A**

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**Summary: To Consider Social Media Guidance for Councillors**

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### **1.0 Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 Social media is fast becoming the channel of choice for our residents and as such it is vital that the council actively engages with this to remain relevant to them.
- 1.2 Councillors' use of social media can help support dialogue between them and their constituents, community groups and partner agencies which helps to support the council's values of openness and transparency.
- 1.3 Although social media is an informal method of communication it is not without some significant risks. Users need to be aware of what these are and how to avoid them however the council currently offers no guidance on this.

### **2.0 The Current Situation**

- 2.1 Some councillors are already actively using social media to create dialogue with their constituents. This should be encouraged however the use of Social Media does come with associated risks, some of which are considered criminal offences and carry significant penalties; data protection; harassment; incitement; discrimination; defamation and copyright.
- 2.2 Inappropriate use of social media could also have a detrimental effect on both the Council's and individual's reputations. Once a comment is posted it can be read and resent many times in seconds and so is almost impossible to remove or delete.
- 2.3 To specifically support councillors in their use of social media, guidelines, as outlined at Annex 1, have been developed to highlight the benefits and risks and how to get the most from their online interactions.

### **3.0 Options**

- 1. To approve the Social Media Guidance for Councillors attached at Annex 1 and agree to include it in Part 5 – Codes and Protocols of the Council's Constitution.
- 2. To recommend amendments to the Social Media Guidance for Councillors.
- 3. To not approve the Social Media Guidance for Councillors.

#### **4.0 Recommendation of Standards Committee**

4.1 At its meeting on 1 April 2014, Standards Committee AGREED TO RECOMMEND to Council:

4.1.1 THAT the Social Media Guidance for Councillors, as attached at Annex 1, be approved and included in Part 5 [Codes and Protocols] of the Council's constitution.

#### **5.0 Corporate Implications**

##### **5.1 Financial and VAT**

5.1.1 None

##### **5.2 Legal**

5.2.1 None

##### **5.3 Corporate**

5.3.1 The use of social media carries with it a risk of damage to corporate reputation if it is used inappropriately. This guidance outlines these risks and how to avoid them.

##### **5.4 Equity and Equalities**

5.4.1 The Social Media Guidance for Councillors references the Equality Act and abiding by equalities legislation as well as the criminal repercussions of discrimination against protected characteristics.

#### **6.0 Recommendation**

6.1 THAT, following the recommendation of Standards Committee, the Social Media Guidance for Councillors, as attached at Annex 1, be approved and included in Part 5 [Codes and Protocols] of the Council's constitution.

#### **7.0 Decision Making Process**

7.1 This is a decision for Council to take.

Contact Officer:	<i>Justine Wingate, Communications Manager</i>
Reporting to:	<i>Sue McGonigal, Chief Executive</i>

#### **Annex List**

Annex 1	Social Media Guidance for Councillors
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#### **Corporate Consultation Undertaken**

Finance	<i>n/a</i>
Legal	<i>Harvey Patterson, Corporate &amp; Regulatory Services Manager and Monitoring Officer, Ext 7005</i>