

REPORT TO	ON
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE STANDARDS COMMITTEE	28 June 2017 29 June 2017

Jan 2017



TITLE	AUTHOR	Agenda item No.
Social Media Protocol – Update	Interim Governance Manager	4

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 At their meeting in February 2017 the Standards Committee approved a draft Protocol for the use of Social Media by Elected Members. The intention was that the Governance Committee in April 2017, and then full Council in May 2017, would approve and finalise the document.

1.2 However, shortly after the Committee met, the Online Safeguarding Adviser to Lancashire Safeguarding Children’s Board had sight of the draft Protocol and, although complimentary about the draft as a whole, did suggest that it could be strengthened in a number of areas with safeguarding specifically in mind. This report therefore updates members on the changes suggested and seeks member approval on the amended draft document.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members:

2.1 Review and approve the draft Social Media Protocol for all Members.

2.2 Note the need for the Protocol to be considered and approved by both the Standards and Governance Committees prior to submission by full Council as part of the Council’s Constitution.

2.3 Agree to recommend to Council that all Members attend training on the effective and responsible use of social media.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The report relates to the following corporate priorities

Clean, green and safe		Strong and healthy communities	
Strong South Ribble in the heart of prosperous Lancashire		Efficient, effective and exceptional council	√

4. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

4.1. Increasingly social media has become a recognised way for people to talk to both Councillors and the Council itself. However, although social media can be a very effective method of

communication many organisations have recognised the need to issue guidelines to encourage responsible use.

4.2 The amended protocol at **Appendix A** is designed to give Members practical advice on the use of social media. It points out the need to bear in mind the provisions of the Member Code of Conduct, legal considerations, and sets out some tips to avoid possible pitfalls.

4.3 This Protocol purely relates to the use of social media by Members. The Communications Team are looking separately at a policy for the use of social media by staff.

4.4 The draft Protocol was originally approved by the Standards Committee at the last meeting of the Committee in February 2017. Shortly after the meeting, the Council's Safeguarding Lead met with the Online Safeguarding Adviser to Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board and shared the draft Protocol. The Adviser was complimentary about the draft but suggested it could be strengthened in a number of areas with safeguarding specifically in mind.

4.5 The sections which have been added at the suggestion of the Online Safeguarding Adviser are in italics for ease of reference.

What is social media?

4.6 Social media is here to stay. Popular social media sites include You tube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram, with people using social media to get news, talk to friends, join in conversations, voice opinions and share experiences.

4.7 Although as a Member you will still need to use a variety of communication tools, the benefits of using social media include:

- Finding out about what people are talking about locally, their interests and concerns
- Keeping up with breaking news, the latest research or policy announcements
- Coordinating campaigns
- Letting your electorate know what you are doing in response to their concerns

4.8 For those Members still to start using social media the LGA has issued guidance on the effective use of social media based on valuable feedback from over 120 local government councillors and officers. Their website (<http://www.local.gov.uk/social-media>) has detailed tips on getting started and do's and don'ts.

4.9 The biggest tip, according to the LGA, is to build your online community by sharing, listening, being active and being social. You need to provide interesting things to read, watch or listen to and you need to show your human side. If you only use social media to post press releases or political slogans you will miss the opportunity to engage a far wider section of your local community.

4.10 However, there can also be pitfalls in the use of social media and the Protocol is intended to highlight the main issues to be aware of and offers guidance on how to engage the public in a constructive way without running foul of the Code of Conduct or the law.

Main sections within the Protocol

4.11 The Protocol deals with the following:

- a. The importance of ensuring that you are clear whether you are acting and commenting in your capacity as a South Ribble Borough Councillor or as a private individual. Both the Code of Conduct and the Protocol only apply if you are acting as a Member. Stresses online impressions count and you should carefully consider your online profile.

- b. The relevance of the Code of Conduct particularly:
 - Treating others with respect
 - Compliance with equality laws
 - Not bullying or intimidating others
 - Not disclosing confidential information

- c. General legal considerations including:
 - Libel
 - Copyright
 - Data Protection
 - Bias and Pre determination
 - Obscene material
 - Harassment
 - Electoral Periods

- d. Use of social media in Council and Committee meetings.

- e. Staying out of trouble – some Do's and Don'ts. Sets out tips for helping you use social media effectively using a common sense approach and an awareness of potential risks.

Training for all Members

4.12 Members also requested that training on the use of social media be arranged for Members. The Communications Team have already been in contact to arrange social media training sessions for staff and members run by Darren Caveney at Comms2point0 (www.comms2point0.co.uk) focussing on the best ways to engage using social media. It is recommended that the Committee agree to recommend to Council that all members attend one of the sessions. The Online Safeguarding Adviser has also made a number of points to be raised in training sessions. This included the use of hash tags, data bleed (ie linking accounts on social media) and taking care to consider the need to act as a suitable online role model for children.

Summary

4.13 Members are requested to review and approve the draft Protocol at Appendix A. The intention would be that it is included within the Council's Constitution and so the report will also need to be approved by the Governance Committee at its meeting on the 28 June 2017 and subsequently full Council in July.

It is then proposed it will also be available online on the new Councillor Connect page in addition to within the Constitution itself.

6 WIDER IMPLICATIONS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTATION

6.1 Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.2 Comments of the Monitoring Officer

There are no new or additional legal burdens when using social media but there are a numbers of risk areas to consider. These are set out at section 4 of the Protocol.

Other implications:	
Risk	The Protocol is designed to highlight the potential risks of using Social Media as a member and how to mitigate potential risks.
Equality	The Protocol highlights the requirement on members to comply with Equality Laws.
HR	There are no specific HR implications arising from this report

7. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

I&DEA Connected Councillors - a guide to using social media to support local leadership
WLGA Social Media: A Guide for Councillors
LGA Effective use of social media <http://www.local.gov.uk/social-media>

Appendix A – Amended Protocol on the use of Social Media