

<b>REPORT TO</b>	<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>
Standards Committee	23 February 2017

Report template revised June 2008



<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO</b>	<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>ITEM</b>
Social Media Protocol for Members	Not applicable	CJ Elwood	4

## **SUMMARY AND LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

At their last meeting on the 8 December 2016 Members requested that a draft protocol on the use of social media (including training for all members) be prepared and presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

A draft Protocol for Members views is set out at Appendix A and arrangements for training being investigated.

This report links to the council’s priority of being an “Efficient, Effective and Exceptional Council”

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Members:

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

Note the need for the Protocol to be considered and approved by the Governance Committee and full Council as part of the Councils Constitution.

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

## **DETAILS AND REASONING**

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.

The draft 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.

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.

### **What is social media?**

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.

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

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.

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.

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**

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.
- 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**

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](http://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. In the meantime a copy of the draft protocol has been provided to the trainer and an update will be provided after the meeting of the Committee.

## Summary

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 12 April 2017 and subsequently full Council in May.

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

## WIDER IMPLICATIONS

In the preparation of this report, consideration has been given to the impact of its proposals in all the areas listed below, and the table shows any implications in respect of each of these.

<b>FINANCIAL</b>	The cost of Member training can be met from existing training budgets.
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<b>LEGAL</b>	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.
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<b>RISK</b>	The Protocol is designed to highlight the potential risks of using Social Media as a member and how to mitigate potential risks.
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<b>THE IMPACT ON EQUALITY</b>	The Protocol highlights the requirement on members to comply with Equality Laws.
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<b>OTHER (see below)</b>	
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<i>Asset Management</i>	<i>Corporate Plans and Policies</i>	<i>Crime and Disorder</i>	<i>Efficiency Savings/Value for Money</i>
<i>Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion</i>	<i>Freedom of Information/ Data Protection</i>	<i>Health and Safety</i>	<i>Health Inequalities</i>
<i>Human Rights Act 1998</i>	<i>Implementing Electronic Government</i>	<i>Staffing, Training and Development</i>	<i>Sustainability</i>

## 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>