

Committee: Standards and General Purposes Committee

Date: 23 July 2020

Wards: All

Subject: Social Media Guidance for Councillors

Lead officer: Louise Round, Managing Director of SLLP and Monitoring Officer

Lead member: Chair of Standards and General Purposes Committee

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Recommendations:

- A. To approve the Social Media Guidance for Councillors and to recommend its adoption to full Council.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To seek approval of the Social Media Guidance for Councillors, which is designed to give guidance on the safe use of social media.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1 The use of social media is increasing exponentially. Whilst it is a useful tool for all walks of life, including assistance in performing the role of a Councillor, the pitfalls are becoming more apparent. It is important to have safeguards in place to ensure that the benefits of social media are exploited, without breaching the law or codes of conduct. This guidance has been designed to raise awareness of the responsibilities of Councillors in relation to social media and to give guidance on the safe use of social media. It should be read in conjunction with the Councillor Code of Conduct and the Acceptable Use of IT Policy. A copy of the Guidance is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2. This report was deferred at the last meeting of the Committee in March to allow the political groups to consider and comment on the draft guidance. Consultation has taken place. There were no objections in principle to the guidance but some suggested drafting amendments have been incorporated.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Council could have taken no action in this respect, but because of the increasing number of incidents nationally involving social media, this was not considered a viable option.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1 The report has been the subject of consultation with all the political groups represented on the Council.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1 If approved by this Committee, the Guidance will be submitted to the next full Council meeting for approval.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial, resource or property implications.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There is potential for breaches of various areas of law including defamation, copyright, harassment, data protection, discrimination and malicious and obscene communications in the use of social media.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 No equalities impact needs assessment (EINA) has been carried out, but the guidance included information about potential breaches of equality provisions.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None for the purposes of this report, other than guidance is given regarding prevention of potential crimes.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The purpose of the Guidance is to minimise risk in relation to such things as reputational damage or breaches of the law.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Social Media Guidance for Councillors

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. Social Media Guidance for Councillors