

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday, 5 February 2018
Report Subject	Social Media Protocol
Report Author	Chief Officer Governance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The code of conduct does not contain any specific provision relating to the use of social media however it does contain obligations on:

- treating people with respect
- compliance with equalities legislation; and
- not bringing one's council or position into disrepute
- use of council resources for party political purposes

These provisions only apply where a member is acting in an official capacity and so purely private use of social media does not fall within the ambit of the code.

To date the Council has not adopted a separate social media protocol, and has instead circulated to members the guidance published by WLGA which addresses the issues raised by social media clearly and comprehensively. That guidance is 4 years old. The WLGA is currently reviewing the guidance and is open to comments on how it might be improved or updated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Committee continues to rely on the WLGA social media guidance
2	That the Committee submits any suggestions for updating or improving the guidance to the WLGA.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	HOW THE CODE APPLIES TO SOCIAL MEDIA
1.01	<p>The code only applies to Members who are acting in an official capacity. This includes acting or giving the impression of acting in the role of Member. Thus if a Member mentions public issues or Council activity on social media then those comments are likely to be perceived as having been made in an official capacity. Purely personal use of social media, especially where visibility is closed and not public (e.g. limited to friends only on Facebook), will fall outside the ambit of the code.</p>
1.02	<p>The code of conduct does not specifically include any obligations in relation to social media. At their essence social media are simply means of mass communication and so the following obligations in the code are potentially relevant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paragraph 4(a) have due regard to the need for equality of opportunity• Paragraph 4(b) show respect and consideration for others• Paragraph 5(a) do not disclose confidential information• Paragraph 6(1)(a) not to bring office or authority into disrepute
1.03	<p>The WLGA published a very clear and comprehensive guide to social media that was circulated to all Members when it was published and circulated to members of the committee. The guidance contains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A short explanation of the different social media• A positive explanation of the benefits of using social media• Guidance on style and “do’s and don’ts”• Guidance on possible code issues• Commentary on predetermination• A reminder not to use council IT equipment for party political purposes
1.04	<p>The WLGA guidance is now four years old. The WLGA is currently considering updating and refreshing it. Members may wish to comment on ways in which the guidance could be updated or improved. For example it does not give any advice on how Members can look after their own safety and well-being on social media.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None associated with this report.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	None.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	The purpose of social media guidance is to enable Councillors to benefit from the use of social media whilst minimising the associated risks such as reputational damage, breaching the code of conduct.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>WLGA Social Media Guidance - http://www.wlga.wales/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=62&mid=665&fileid=344</p> <p>Contact Officer: Gareth Owens, Chief Officer Governance Telephone: 01352 702344 E-mail: gareth.legal@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the interests of local government and promotes local democracy in Wales. It represents the 22 local authorities in Wales and the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities are associate members.</p> <p>The WLGA's primary purposes are to promote better local government and its reputation and to support authorities in the development of policies and priorities which will improve public services and democracy.</p>