

**Report to:** Governance Committee

**Date of meeting:** 10 January 2024

**By:** Assistant Chief Executive

**Title:** Social media guidance for Councillors

**Purpose:** To consider and agree the Social Media Guidance for Councillors

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**The Governance Committee is recommended to agree the Social Media Guidance for Councillors attached at Appendix 1.**

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### **1 Background**

1.1 Social media is a useful communication tool for members, increasing access to audiences and improving the accessibility of communication. However, its use does give rise to risks and some complexities. In recent years there has been an increase across England in Code of Conduct complaints against Councillors in respect of their use of social media. With this in mind, the attached Social Media Guidance for Councillors has been produced (Appendix 1) to assist Members in this area.

1.2 The guidance offers advice and tips to Members on how to help ensure the public are clear on whether a councillor is using social media on behalf of the Council or as a private individual. It also offers advice on how to ensure that the use of social media by members is lawful and does not expose the council or the councillor to security risks, reputational damage or breach the current data protection legislation.

### **2 Code of Conduct for Members and social media use**

2.1 Members may use social media in both an official and personal capacity but will need to keep in mind that the public may perceive them as acting in their official capacity, whether that is the individual Member's intention or not. The sections of the Council's Code of Conduct for Members most likely to give rise to complaints include the requirements to treat others with respect; not to bring the office of Councillor or the Council into disrepute; and prohibiting the disclosure of confidential information. The Local Government Association has published a social media checklist for Councillors which is appended to the guidance along with a range of useful links.

2.2 The Member Reference Group were asked to consider and comment on the guidance at their meeting of 8 December 2023. Their feedback has been incorporated into the final version which is attached at appendix 1.

2.3 There is also a standing offer of social media training open to all Members which is provided by the Communications team. Details are available on the Member Training and Development Programme. Alternatively, Members can contact the Member Services team if they would like more detail.

### **3 Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation**

3.1 The proposed social media guidance will provide advice and guidance to Members on the effective and appropriate use of social media and how it interacts with the Code of Conduct. The Governance Committee is therefore asked to agree the guidance attached at Appendix 1.

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