

Governance Committee

Wednesday, 13th March 2024, 2.30 pm

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Chorley and YouTube

Agenda

- 1 **Apologies**
- 2 **Declarations of Any Interests**

Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any pecuniary interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda.

If you have a pecuniary interest you must withdraw from the meeting. Normally you should leave the room before the business starts to be discussed. You do, however, have the same right to speak as a member of the public and may remain in the room to enable you to exercise that right and then leave immediately. In either case you must not seek to improperly influence a decision on the matter.
- 3 **Minutes of meeting Thursday, 8 February 2024 of Governance Committee** (Pages 3 - 6)

To agree the minutes of the last meeting, held on Thursday 8 February 2024, as an accurate record for signing by the Chair.
- 4 **Internal Audit Plan April - September 2024** (Pages 7 - 12)

To receive and consider the report of the Head of Audit and Risk.
- 5 **Key Contracts and Partnerships Framework Refresh** (Pages 13 - 26)

To receive and consider the report of the Director of Change and Delivery.
- 6 **Social Media Protocol** (Pages 27 - 70)

To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Monitoring Officer.
- 7 **RIPA Application Update**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer will present a verbal report at the meeting.
- 8 **Any urgent business previously agreed with the Chair**

Chris Sinnott
Chief Executive

Electronic agendas sent to Members of the Governance Committee Councillor Alan Platt (Chair), Councillor Mark Clifford (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Gordon France, Christine Heydon, Samantha Martin, Dedrah Moss, Jean Sherwood and Neville Whitham.

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**MINUTES OF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE****MEETING DATE Thursday, 8 February 2024****MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillor Alan Platt (Chair), Councillor Mark Clifford (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Gordon France, Christine Heydon, Samantha Martin, Dedrah Moss, Jean Sherwood and Neville Whitham**OFFICERS:** Louise Mattinson (Director of Finance), Jean Waddington (Principal Financial Accountant) and Ben Storey (Democratic and Member Services Officer)**APOLOGIES:** Pete Ripley (Independent Person)**OTHER MEMBERS:** Charlotte Fitch (Independent Person) and Matt Derrick (Grant Thornton)**23.G.59 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Pete Ripley (Independent Person)

23.G.60 Declarations of Any Interests

No declarations of any interests were made.

23.G.61 Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 17 January 2024 of Governance Committee**Resolved: (Unanimously)**

That the minutes of the last meeting, held on Wednesday 17 January 2024, were agreed as an accurate record for signing by the Chair, subject to an additional reference in relation to the requirement to update the CMS system to ensure improvements within the procurement service.

23.G.62 Chorley Audit Findings Report 2022/23

Matt Derrick, from Grant Thornton presented the report which summarised findings from their audit for the period of 2022/2023.

Members heard that the audit was now substantively complete, subject to final quality checks and certification of the accounts. Final adjustments that had been made since the draft findings had been considered by the Committee concerned valuations, where a duplication and several land assets had been incorrectly recorded. There was a

significant adjustment with regards to how Astley Hall was accounted for, given that the Hall was now a fully operational asset following refurbishment work. As such, the Hall had been amended from a heritage asset with a nominal value of £1 to being incorporated in the accounts with a valuation of £2.3 million.

The pension liability was now a 'pension asset' and subsequently required different accounting considerations. As a result of it not being a 'true asset' the asset had been limited to nil and therefore just under £10 million had been removed from the accounts – though it was stressed that this had no impact on the value of the pension fund itself, as it was purely a required accounting treatment for the statutory accounts.

Other adjustments that were highlighted included deficiencies around ICT controls, additional conclusions around weaknesses identified on Value for Money work and changes around the accounting period for the Tatton development given the project was undertaken across different financial years.

Responding to a query as to how recommendations, particularly around valuations and bank reconciliations, are followed up and monitored, the Committee were advised that recommendations from both internal and external auditors were added to the Council's risk management system and monitored regularly by the Corporate Governance Group, which comprised of members of the senior management team. In addition, responses and progress on agreed recommendations would also be reviewed as part of subsequent external audits.

Addressing concerns around property valuations, Members were informed that a procurement exercise had been undertaken to procure a one year valuation service which will be in place for the 2023/2024 accounts. A cross-departmental working group had been established to deliver improvements to the whole valuation process in the future. Longer term, plans to undertake a joint procurement with South Ribble and Blackburn with Darwen for valuation services were being developed.

On cash and bank reconciliations, progress had been made over the last few years following a period of significant challenges. System upgrades and new processes had been implemented that had impacted on the bank reconciliation process, but the implementation issues had now been addressed and resolved, and all of the accounts are reconciled and up-to-date.

To provide the Committee with reassurance that issues that are identified in the external audits are being addressed, specifically in relation to weaknesses around IT controls and system security, Members requested interim update reports to monitor progress in this area.

Members were advised that the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) consultation had now concluded but as of yet, no further update had been provided on the proposed changes to external audit fees.

When asked, the external auditor confirmed that they were satisfied with the management responses to the recommendations within the report, noting progress made in some areas already and further reviews undertaken in subsequent audits.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

Matt Derrick, from Grant Thornton presented this report and summarised the key findings of the Auditors Annual Report for 2022/2023.

The external auditor concluded that there had been Significant Weaknesses in the Council's arrangements relating to the onboarding and governance arrangements of contractors and their access to systems, and also with the procurement service. It was however, acknowledged that progress had been made in these areas. The Committee's attention was also drawn to Improvement Recommendations included within the report, and that whilst these weren't deemed to be deficient, they were areas that could be strengthened.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

23.G.64 Statement of Accounts 2022/23

The Principal Financial Accountant presented this report which sought approval of amendments to the 2022/2023 Statement of Accounts following the completion of the external audit.

Much of the work had been completed, presented to committee and approved, but as agreed at the last committee meeting in November, the accounts would be brought back for further approval if there were any further amendments required that were deemed material to the financial position of the council.

The report highlighted these amendments covered changes around asset valuations, notably the categorisation of Astley Hall, and how the pension 'asset' is accounted for.

Resolved: (Unanimously)

That the Committee approve the statement which have been amended during the completion of the external audit to include the adjustments as outlined within the report.

23.G.65 RIPA Application Update

The Democratic and Member Services Officer confirmed that no RIPA applications had been made since the last meeting of the Governance Committee.

23.G.66 Work Programme

The Committee noted the work programme for the remaining meeting of the 2023/2024 municipal year, with the addition of the proposed new social media protocol that the Governance Working Group are reviewing at the March meeting.

23.G.67 Any urgent business previously agreed with the Chair

There was none.

Chair

Date



Report of	Meeting	Date
Head of Audit and Risk	Governance Committee	Wednesday, 13 March 2024

Internal Audit Plan April - September 2024

Is this report confidential?	No
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Purpose of the Report

- This report sets out the programme of work to be undertaken by the Internal Audit Service. The Internal Audit Plan is the vehicle by which audit workload is identified and prioritised.

The main purposes of the report are to:

- Remind members of the respective roles of managers and Internal Audit to maintain a sound system of governance and internal control within the Council;
- Provide details of the Internal Audit Plan and associated performance indicators;
- Seek the Committee’s approval of the Audit Plan.

Recommendations

- That the Committee approve the Internal Audit Plan and associated indicators.

Reasons for recommendations

- Governance Committee approval of the Internal Audit Plan is a requirement of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

Other options considered and rejected

- Not applicable.

Corporate priorities

- The report relates to the following corporate priorities: (Please bold one)

Housing where residents can live well	A green and sustainable borough
An enterprising economy with vibrant local centres in urban and rural areas	Healthy, safe and engaged communities

The Role of Management and Internal Audit

6. The responsibility for implementing a strong system of governance and internal control within the Council lies primarily with the Shared Senior Management Team. Directors and Service Leads need to ensure that they maintain effective control procedures not least because services and business systems are subject to on-going change.
7. Internal Audit is an independent appraisal function whose core objective is to evaluate and report on the adequacy of the Council's system of governance, risk management and internal control. In the main this is achieved through an annual programme of reviews, following a detailed risk assessment of audit need.

Development of the Internal Audit Plan

8. Professional standards for Internal Audit in local government specify that "the Chief Audit Executive must establish risk-based plans to determine the priorities of the internal audit activity, consistent with the organisation's goals."
9. To enable Internal Audit to be flexible and responsive to ongoing changes in priorities, strategy, operational arrangements, external factors that may increase the Council's exposure to risk and keep pace with to emerging risks across the organisation, it has been previously agreed with the Governance Committee that Internal Audit Plan is only developed for April to September. The process is then to revisit the audit needs analysis and to liaise with key stakeholders to consider any new and emerging risks to identify the work plan for October to March 25.

Compilation of the Audit Plan

10. The Internal Audit Plan April – September has been constructed after taking into consideration the following:
 - The Council's priorities / strategic plan;
 - A review of corporate strategies;
 - The corporate risk register;
 - Information taken from other assurance processes within, and external to, the Council, including External Audit and inspection reports;
 - Direct engagement with Directors;
 - The skills, knowledge and experience of audit staff;
 - Professional judgement on the risk of fraud and error;
 - Annual Governance Statement and Service Assurance Statements.
11. The Internal Audit Plan contains the programme of reviews for the period of April 24 to September 24 and is shown at **Appendix A**. This clearly shows the link between the work of Internal Audit, strategic and operational risks and corporate objectives. The reviews are clearly highlighted with the quarter for completion. The plan also details our involvement with key project teams assisting with advice and guidance on risk management, internal control and governance.

Internal Audit Reviews of Chorley Leisure Limited

- 12. It has again been agreed that the Internal Audit Service will provide 75 audit days to Chorley Leisure Limited (CLL). Whilst the outcome of each audit review will be reported to the Board of the Directors, the Governance Committee will receive an annual opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control, risk management and governance arrangements for CLL.

Audit Resource

- 13. The plans for both the Council and CLL will be completed solely by the in-house team with external support procured for the specialist ICT reviews. Over the past 12 months, the Service profile has changed with the introduction of a further Trainee Auditor post. The current level of resource is detailed in the table below:

Head of Audit and Risk	0.6 FTE
Senior Auditor	0.8 FTE
Auditor	0.8 FTE
Trainee Auditor	2 x FTE
Bought in resource	30 days

Internal Audit Performance Indicators

- 14. For the forthcoming period of April 24 to March 25, there is no change to the performance indicators or targets. Progress will be monitored throughout the period and reported to the Governance Committee three time per year.

Performance Indicator	Target
% of Planned time used	90%
% of Audit Plan completed	90%
% satisfaction rating (assignment level)	90%
% of agreed actions implemented by management	90%

Update on the Physical Security and Environmental Controls Review

- 15. Progress is being made with the implementation of the agreed internal audit actions. Budget has been identified and orders raised with contractors and it is anticipated that works will be completed by the agreed timescale. A further update will be provided in the annual report to the committee in May 2024.

Climate change and air quality

- 16. The work noted in this report does not impact the climate change and sustainability targets of the Councils Green Agenda and all environmental considerations are in place.

Equality and diversity

17. The material presented and discussed in this report has no direct implications on equality and diversity.

Risk

18. Risks are outlined through the body of the report.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

19. No comment.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

20. No comment.

Background documents

There are no background papers to this report

Appendices

Appendix A – Internal Audit Plan April 2024 – September 2024

Report Author:	Email:	Telephone:	Date:
Dawn Highton (Head of Audit and Risk)	dawn.highton@southribble.gov.uk	01772376639	28.2.24

Chorley Council Internal Audit Plan - April 2024 to September 2024	Qtr for completion	Allocated days	Rationale	Links to Risk Registers (strategic & operational) / Corporate Plan Projects / Business plans / Annual Governance Statement (AGS
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CORPORATE AREAS				
Annual Governance Statement	1	15	To support the Annual Governance Statement	AGS
Anti-Fraud & Corruption	ALL	1	Review and update of probity policies / fraud alerts	AGS
NFI	1&2	2.5	Review / Investigation of 2024 matches	AGS
CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL				
Customer Services				
Sundry Debtors	2	10	Key Financial System – focus on raising invoices within Services	Operational risk
ICT				
Corporate Network access	2	7.5	Management of active directory, third party and member access	Operational risk
Streetscene				
Fuel consumption	2	15	Risk based review	Operational / financial / fraud risk
PROPERTY AND PLANNING				
Development Management				
Development Management	2	15	Risk based review	Operational risk
CCTV	1	15	Compliance with the Code of Practice	Compliance review
Project support – major projects	1&2	2.5	Proactive support to assist major projects	Corporate Plan projects

Chorley Council Internal Audit Plan - April 2024 to September 2024	Qtr for completion	Allocated days	Rationale	Links to Risk Registers (strategic & operational) / Corporate Plan Projects / Business plans / Annual Governance Statement (AGS
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CHANGE AND DELIVERY				
UKSPF Funding	1	15	Governance review	Corporate plan
Gifts and Hospitality	1	5	Review of compliance with code of conduct (members)	AGS
GOVERNANCE				
Procurement support	1&2	2.5	Support in preparation of the new Procurement Act	AGS
GENERAL AREAS				
Post Audit Reviews	ALL	5	Follow up of agreed actions	AGS / Operational risk registers
IDEA reviews	1&2	2.5	Data matching key financial systems	AGS / Operational risk registers
Contingency / Irregularities	ALL	2.5	Unplanned reviews / contingency	
Residual Work from 2023-2024	1	10	Finalise 23/24 reviews	AGS / Operational risk registers
Committee Reporting / Effectiveness Review	All	5	Preparation of reports and attendance at Governance Committee	
TOTALS		131		



Report of	Meeting	Date
Director (Change and Delivery)	Governance Committee	Wednesday, 13 March 2024

Key Contracts and Partnerships Framework Refresh

Is this report confidential?	No
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Is this decision key?	Not applicable
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Purpose of the Report

- To present the Key Contracts and Partnerships Framework (included at Appendix A).

Recommendations to Governance Committee

- To consider the updated Key Contracts and Partnerships Framework for approval by Cabinet.

Reasons for recommendations

- To ensure the framework remains fit for purpose and supports aligned ways of working within shared services.

Other options considered and rejected

- To not refresh the framework, which would result in the identified improvements not being implemented. This has been rejected as it would not ensure the framework remains fit for purpose.
- To not share the updated framework with South Ribble Borough Council. This would mean that shared officers must adhere to different framework criteria, in some cases for contracts monitored by both councils. This has been rejected as it would not support aligned ways of working.

Corporate priorities

- The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Housing where residents can live well	A green and sustainable borough
An enterprising economy with vibrant local centres in urban and rural areas	Healthy, safe and engaged communities

Background

7. The Key Contracts and Partnerships Framework sets out monitoring arrangements for contracts and partnerships whose significance justifies additional scrutiny. This may be due to a combination of their monetary value, length of the commitment, their impact on the council’s strategic objectives or the level of risk associated with them.

8. The monitoring of the Council’s key contracts and partnerships is an established process, with the framework first developed and approved at Chorley in 2007. Since its inception, the framework was formally reviewed in 2012 and informally updated in 2017. Reports takes place to the council’s Shared Senior Management Team on a bi-annual basis and Executive Cabinet annually, reporting on areas including progress against objectives, known risks or issues, and financial stability.

9. The framework currently monitors 14 contracts and partnerships, 10 of which are also monitored by South Ribble’s Key Contract and Partnership Framework. The framework refresh proposes to create a shared framework with South Ribble Borough Council, to support aligned ways of working for shared services staff while ensuring the framework remains fit for purpose.

Outlining the Framework and Changes

10. The council is involved in many contracts and partnerships, with many different partners. The framework differentiates the level of governance and risk management required based on the following criteria:
 - Their financial value
 - Their impact on the delivery of the council’s strategic objectives
 - How reliant the Council is on the proposed partner for service delivery
 - There is a significant degree of risk
 - The length/timescales of the commitment are significant

11. The updated framework has looked at best practice from other organisations, compared the existing frameworks and considered internal audit recommendations to create improvements.

12. Changes to the framework include:

Key Changes	Rationale
An aligned framework across Chorley and South Ribble	<p>There are a number of similarities in the existing frameworks for each council which are available here and here. Aligning the frameworks will support officers who are working across both councils as a number of key contracts or partnerships are shared across Chorley and South Ribble.</p> <p>Reporting and separate lists of each contract/ partnership will remain sovereign for each council.</p>
Introducing a checklist for identifying key contracts and partnerships	The introduction of standardised criteria will provide greater clarity for the reasons why the contracts and partnerships included on the framework are more significant and justify additional scrutiny

Reformatting Layout	The new layout provides a clear diagram of the framework process, and the actions needed at each stage. This should improve the framework’s functionality as a reference document for officers.
Introducing a governance self-assessment for responsible officers to complete	A checklist of required governance arrangements has been introduced to set clear expectations for the governance arrangements that need to be in place for key contracts or partnerships. As the checklist will be referred to at each monitoring update, it should also support and maintain officer awareness of governance expectations.
Spot Checks	Spot checks will be introduced to ensure governance arrangements are in place.
Updating the role of the responsible officer	To reflect current expectations of responsible officers.

13. The framework’s function as a reporting mechanism to members remains unchanged, with separate lists maintained for each local authority. Reporting to members would continue to be annually via Cabinet, and will continue to include financial monitoring, updates on objectives and any emerging risks or issues.

14. The current contracts and partnerships monitored by the framework are provided in the below table. These will be reviewed against the updated criteria areas after the framework is refreshed.

Contract/Partnership	Purpose
Chorley Leisure	To provide leisure facilities to residents.
FCC	To provide a waste and recycling collection service and deliver service improvement throughout lifetime of contract.
Parkwood Leisure Ltd.	To manage Duxbury Park Golf Course.
IDOX	To provide planning, land changes, environment, and licensing software (Regulatory Services)
NEC – Docs Online	To provide DOL Managed Service (docs online). This is the scanning of correspondence and documents to reduce reliance on paper and increase digital security.
NEC – EDMS	To provide Electronic Document Management System software.
Civica (Financial System)	To provide core financials system software and maintenance, alongside the Civica Pay system for customer payments.
Shared Services	Sovereign councils working together with shared functions to deliver council services.
Local Plan	To develop and deliver the Central Lancashire local plan for 2024.
Select Move	To provide a sub-regional choice-based lettings scheme with a common allocations policy.

Enghouse	Telephony, to provide the functionality for omnichannel contact centre
Goss	Website module- content management system
Blackpool Council (Payroll)	To provide a payroll and expense service for all employees and elected member.
Capita	To provide Revenues and Benefits Software and a Remote Support Service

15. Alongside the refresh of the framework, a separate piece of work is taking place to review all of the partnerships and collaborative working arrangements across the council to ensure that they are driven by good practice, are joined up, and are not duplicating each other.

Climate change and air quality

16. The framework report has an overall neutral impact the Council's Carbon emissions and the wider Climate Emergency and sustainability targets of the Council.

Equality and diversity

17. The work outlined in this report does not pose any equality and diversity implications. As a reference document for staff, consideration has been made to ensure the document is accessible.

Risk

18. A key function of the framework is the identification and management of risk. The Key Contracts and Partnerships Framework provides a mechanism for mitigating the risk to service delivery through monitoring and management.

Next Steps

19. Following feedback from Governance Committees, the final framework will be presented to Cabinet in February 2024 for approval.

20. Subject to endorsement by Governance Committees, and approval by cabinet, the following actions are anticipated:

- Review list of existing Key Contracts and Partnerships – Summer 2024
- Launch staff training – Summer 2024
- Update GRACE risk register

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

21. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The financial forecasts for the contracts is included within the quarterly financial monitoring reports.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

22. There are no concerns with this report from a Monitoring Officer perspective.

Report Author:	Email:	Telephone:	Date:
Caroline Winstanley (Transformation Co-ordinator)	caroline.winstanley@chorley.gov.uk		20.02.2024

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Key Contracts and Partnerships Framework

2024

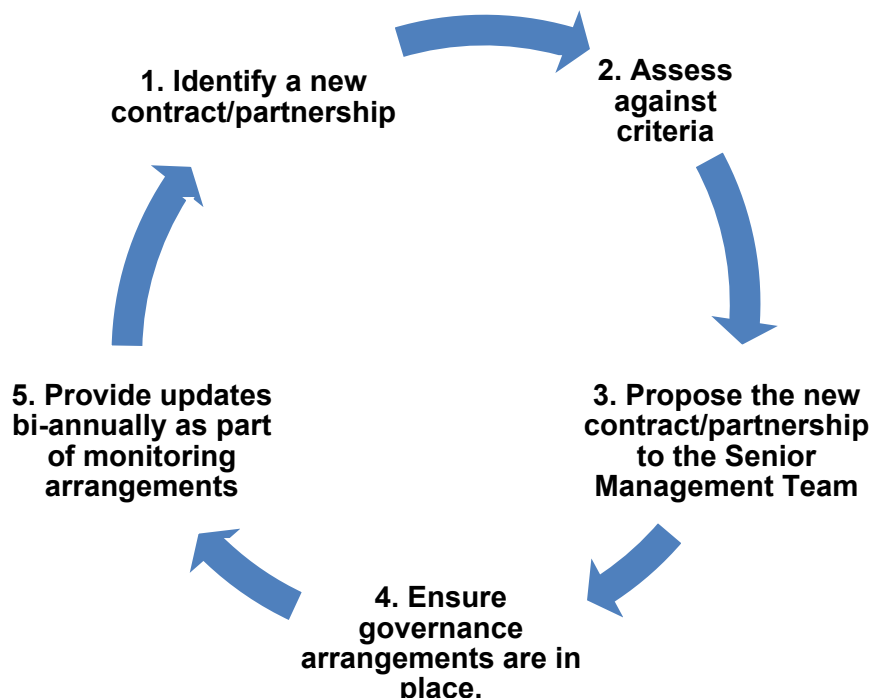
Aim of the framework

At Chorley Council and South Ribble Borough Council, we work in partnership with key contractors to supply services on our behalf and with key partners to deliver high quality services to our residents. The two local authorities share a Senior Management Team, and an increasing number of contracts are either shared or managed by shared services officers. The shared Key Contracts and Partnerships Framework reflects this arrangement by aligning existing monitoring processes across the two local authorities.

The aim of the framework is to provide a fit for purpose, robust and streamlined mechanism to monitor the performance of key contracts and partnerships, ensuring these are effective, efficient, and providing value for money for the Councils. The framework details the criteria used to identify key contracts and partnerships, the monitoring arrangements used to ensure strong governance and delivery, and the responsibility of the relevant officers to enable this feedback process.

Key stages

To ensure that we are effectively identifying key partnerships or contracts, and are monitoring them sufficiently, we have defined the key stages for applying the framework.



Step 1. Identifying a new contract or partnership

It is important to define what we mean by a key contract or partnership:

- Contractual arrangements with organisations, both to provide services on behalf of the Council and to supply the Council with products and services to support the running of Council services.
- Organisations from various sectors that the Council brings together to improve outcomes for local people by working together.

The Councils are involved in many contracts and partnerships. It is important to outline the reasons why some contracts or partnerships warrant additional governance and monitoring than others. We define this below, with a key contract or partnership to meet three or more of the following criteria:

- **Financial** – the contract costs the council £100k or more per annum.
- **Corporate Priorities** – the contract or partnership will significantly impact the delivery of one or more of the Council's corporate priorities.
- **Risk** – there is a high amount of risk associated with the contract or partnership.
- **Length** – the contract or partnership is for five or more years.
- **Resource** – there will be a large reliance on the proposed partner/contractor for service delivery.

Step 2. Assessing against criteria

The criteria set out above determines whether a contract or partnership should be considered key, and therefore subject to monitoring as outlined in this framework. Determining whether a contract or partnership is key will be down to the Responsible Officer by carrying out an assessment against the set criteria. A matrix tool to carry out the assessment is available at Appendix A.

Step 3. Adding new contracts and partnerships

New contracts and partnerships that fall under the remit of this framework should be presented to SMT to consider whether they are 'key' and should be included on the framework. This will take place alongside the bi-annual Key Contracts and Partnership monitoring update that is collated by the Transformation and Partnerships team and presented to the Senior Management Team. This can be facilitated by submitting the completed matrix from appendix A to the Transformation and Partnerships team.

Step 4. Governance

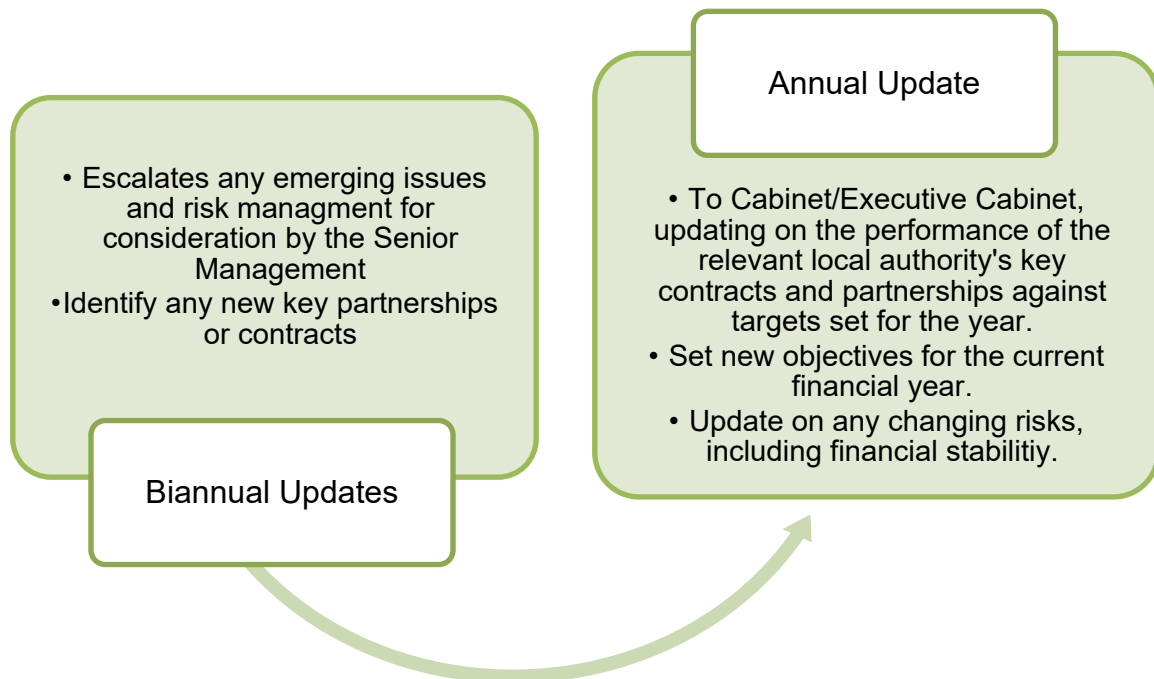
Following the decision to enter into a new key contract or partnership, control measures and governance arrangements should be set out in an agreement or contract.

At the point of entering into a key contract or partnership, the responsible officer should ensure there are governance arrangements in place taking into consideration the areas outlined below. A governance self-assessment is available in appendix A to support officers with this.

- **Aims and objectives**; there should be a common vision and agreed objectives that are aligned with the Council's strategic objectives.

- **Roles and responsibilities;** there needs to be clear roles and responsibilities of the Council and the key partners which should be supported by clear reporting lines and a decision-making framework.
- **Decision making procedures;** there needs to be some alignment between the Council's decision-making processes and timetables with the partners. This enables decisions with significant policy or financial implications to be planned carefully and executed effectively. Key contract or partnership representatives should have sufficient authority to commit their organisations to a particular course of action.
- **Risk management;** good risk management is key to delivering successful outcomes and this should be captured in a joint risk register.
- **Equality and diversity monitoring (includes Integrated Impact Assessment);** the Council will work with partner organisations to promote equality and diversity in line with the Council's procedures. The agreement should include a statement on how the partnership will operate on the basis of principles that actively value the benefits of diversity and ensure fair treatment and equality of opportunity.
- **Anti-Fraud and corruption;** partners of the Council and all companies with whom it is contracted, will be fully informed of the procedures the Council has in place to combat fraud.
- **Data quality;** it is critical that any information or data supplied to the Council to monitor performance, make decisions or allocate resources is robust with relevant data sharing and data quality protocols should be in place.
- **Whistleblowing policy;** the Council should take active steps to ensure that key contractors providing services on behalf of the Council either have their own whistle blowing arrangements in place or adopt the Council's.
- **Safeguarding vulnerable adults and children;** the Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and to delivering services for children and vulnerable adults that promote best practice. It expects representatives, colleagues and partners to share this commitment. Partners should refer to the Council's safeguarding policies which set out the Council's guidance on protection procedures and specifies the roles and responsibilities of the Council's representatives.
- **Business continuity arrangement;** there should be effective, relevant business continuity arrangements that are maintained throughout the life of the partnership or contract.
- **Dispute prevention and resolution controls;** the partnership agreement should also contain agreement variation and dispute resolution mechanisms so that if problems arise they are resolved quickly and amicably.
- **Exit strategies;** develop a clear exit strategy for all of its key contracts and partnerships in order to mitigate the financial, reputational and other risks that could materialise. Notice periods and exceptions to notice periods should also be included.

Step 5. Monitoring



To ensure that key contracts and partnerships are monitored proportionately to their significance, the framework sets out a range of controls and measures. These safeguard the success of the contracts and partnerships and ensure that they achieve the priorities and goals outlined in the Corporate Strategy of the relevant Council.

Formal monitoring will take place through a biannual update to SMT and an annual update to the Cabinet/ Executive Cabinet of each Council.

This formal monitoring should supplement ongoing contract management and monitoring at a service level through operational meetings, board meetings and updates to executive members as general good practice.

Role of the Responsible Officer

The Responsible Officer is the person responsible for one or more key contracts and/or partnerships. They should have strategic and operational insight and be one of the key contacts for that contract or partnership.

The Responsible Officer is expected to adhere to this framework and support the reporting mechanism by engaging in the monitoring cycle.

Additional oversight arrangements

Oversight of key contracts and partnerships will also be the responsibility of:

- **Senior Management Team:** Provides oversight of the framework and risk management.

- **Transformation and Partnerships:** responsible for maintaining the framework, compiling the scheduled updates, providing relevant training to responsible officers, as well as support with the five stages outlined within this framework.

Date of next scheduled review: January 2027

Appendix A – Criteria

The below table shows the five different categories of significance used to define whether a contract or partnership is key.

Criteria	Yes/No
Financial – The contract costs the council £100k or more per annum.	
Corporate Priorities – The contract will significantly impact the delivery of one or more of the Council’s corporate priorities	
Risk – There is a high amount of risk associated with the contract (e.g. disruption to core services, £100k+ financial impact not manageable within existing funds, systems unavailable for multiple days)	
Length – The contract is for 5 or more years	
Resource – There will be a large reliance on the proposed partner/contractor for service delivery	

For a contract or partnership to be included as part of the framework, they should meet at least three of the above criteria.

Governance Self-Assessment:

Governance Area	Yes/No – where these are not in place what plans are in place to implement them?
Aims and objectives: there should be a common vision or agreed objectives in place.	
Roles and responsibilities: roles and responsibilities of the Council and the key partner/contractor have been agreed and are clear.	
Decision making procedures: any decisions required by the partnership aligns with the Councils decision-making processes and timetables with the partners.	
Risk Management: a joint risk register has been created, and is on GRACE for regular updates	
Business continuity arrangements: effective arrangements are in place and are maintained.	
Data Sharing Agreement: for contracts/partnerships that require data sharing. A robust DSA has been drafted and signed by all relevant partners.	
For partnerships: Memorandum of Understanding has been drafted and signed by all relevant parties	

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Report of	Meeting	Date
Deputy Monitoring Officer	Governance Committee	Wednesday, 13 March 2024

Social Media Protocol

Is this report confidential?	No
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Is this decision key?	No
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Purpose of the Report

- Members are being asked to consider the contents of a draft Social Media Protocol.

Recommendations

- To approve the appended Social Media Protocol with a view to it being referred to Full Council for adoption

Reasons for recommendations

- It is considerable desirable to update the current council advice/protocol. That advice is primarily directed at officers and was compiled some time ago. The proposed new protocol is aimed at providing advice and guidance to members.

Other options considered and rejected

- We could have failed to address this issue but this was not considered desirable – it was accepted that there was a need to improve the advice and guidance to Members on this issue.

Corporate priorities

- The report relates to the following corporate priorities: (Please bold one)

Housing where residents can live well	A green and sustainable borough
An enterprising economy with vibrant local centres in urban and rural areas	Healthy, safe and engaged communities

Background to the report

6. Members initially considered this issue at the meeting of the Governance Committee on the 17th of January 2024. It was decided to set up a Task Group to look into this further. That Task Group have met on 2 subsequent occasions – the last occasion being the 1st of March 2024.

Detailed Considerations

7. There was an identified need to improve the advice and guidance to members on the use of social media. The existing council advice was primarily directed at officers and was produced some time ago.
8. The use of social media is an increasingly important aspect of a member's work. It is a great way to connect with many people and get your message across. However, there are pitfalls to be avoided when using social media. The members' Code of Conduct will apply to you when using social media for your Council work. An inappropriate use of social media can not only damage an individual councillor's reputation but also that of the Council itself.
9. Appended to this report members will find a draft social media protocol that has been prepared. This document was considered by the Task Group on the 1st of March.
10. When preparing this document officers had regard to existing protocols at other councils as well as Local Government Association guidance.
11. The primary purpose of the protocol is to provide advice and assistance into how a member may make best use of social media for their purposes. It includes a list of do's and don'ts. It points out what some of the pitfalls are and what the consequences can be if they are not avoided. It is designed to bring greater clarity.

Climate change and air quality

12. The work noted in this report has no impact on the Council's Carbon emissions and the wider Climate Emergency and sustainability targets of the Council.

Equality and diversity

13. There are no equality or diversity implications arising from this report.

Risk

14. It was considered necessary to provide members with more comprehensive advice with regard to the use of social media. An inappropriate use of social media by a member can lead to a Standards investigation and a finding that the Code of Conduct has been breached. It can also in certain circumstances potentially lead to legal action against them.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

15. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

- 16. The purpose of the document is designed to advise and assist members – in that regard hopefully it could lead to a reduction in the number of complaints against members. There are no legal concerns with the document that has been produced.

Background documents

There are no background papers to this report

Appendix

Appendix A – Social Media Protocol

Report Author:	Email:	Telephone:	Date:
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Social Media Protocol for Members

Purpose

Social media is an incredibly useful and powerful tool which allows you to share information, create new conversations, understand and respond swiftly to local concerns, coordinate campaigns, assist with casework and let constituents know what you are doing as a local Councillor. Social media can be free or low cost compared to more traditional forms of communication.

However, there can also be pitfalls and to help minimise any risk this Protocol sets out some of the points you should keep in mind whenever you use social media in your official role as a Chorley Councillor

What is Social Media?

Social media is a way to describe websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. Popular social media platforms include Facebook, X (formally known as Twitter), Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr and blogs. On social media sites users share information, discuss opinions and build online communities and networks.

You may already use social media in a private capacity. Consider if you want to create a separate account for any "Councillor" related use. This Protocol and the Code of Conduct for Members both only apply when you are acting in your official capacity as an Elected Member. However, you need to be aware that it may not always be apparent to a member of the public in which capacity you are commenting. This "blurred identity" may have implications if comments made in a private capacity are taken to be those of the Council itself or your political party.

The impression you give online of yourself as a Councillor, and the council, is just as important as the impression you give when face to face, during a council meeting or quoted in the media for example. Consider carefully how you may appear to someone who doesn't know you personally – Is your online profile reflective of who you are and what you represent?

Social Media and the Code of Conduct for Members

Certain sections of the Code of Conduct for Members will apply to your online activity in just the same way as they do to any other written or verbal communication. The key to whether the Code applies is whether you are (or even just appear to be) acting in your capacity as a Councillor rather than as a private individual.

In all your dealings on social media you should take particular care not to publish anything which might bring your role as a Councillor, or Chorley Council itself, into disrepute.

The main sections of the Code to consider are:

- You should always treat others with respect – do not use social media to make personal attacks or indulge in rude, disrespectful or offensive comments.
- You must comply with equality laws.
- You must not bully or intimidate anyone – do not say anything that might be construed as bullying or intimidation whether the comments relate to a council employee, a fellow Councillor or anyone else.
- You must not disclose confidential information – refrain from publishing anything you have received in confidence.

Any complaints made against you under the Code of Conduct will be considered by the Monitoring Officer in conjunction with one of the Independent Persons. This may result in a formal investigation followed by a committee hearing. This could result in the imposition of various sanctions against you. Your reputation may suffer adversely as a consequence.

General legal considerations

There are no new or additional legal burdens when using social media but you are publishing to the web – it's written down and it's permanent so you need to bear the following in mind:

Libel: If you publish an untrue statement about a person which is damaging to their reputation then they may take a libel action against you. This may also happen if someone else publishes something libellous on your social media page/profile/account which you know about and don't take prompt action to remove. A successful libel action can result in an award of damages against you.

Copyright: Publishing images or text on your social media page/profile/account from a copyrighted source (eg photos or extracts from publications) without obtaining permission first is likely to breach copyright laws. Breaching copyright laws can result in damages being awarded against you.

Data Protection: Take care not to publish the personal data of individuals unless you have their specific permission.

Bias and Pre- determination: Whenever you are involved in making planning, licensing or other quasi-judicial decisions do not say anything on social media which suggests that you have already made up your mind before hearing all the evidence and arguments. Otherwise the decision may be at risk of being challenged and declared invalid.

Equality Act: The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. In this context do not publish anything that might be seen as racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic, anti-faith or offensive to any of the groups with protected characteristics as defined in that Act.

Obscene material: You should avoid publishing anything on social media which anyone might consider obscene. Publication of obscene material is a criminal offence.

Harassment: it is a criminal offence to repeatedly pursue a campaign against someone where this is likely to cause alarm, harassment, nuisance or distress.

Electoral Periods: There are some additional duties around campaigning during elections. Full guidance can be downloaded from the Electoral Commission website.

To conclude it must be understood that in a number of the instances listed above serious legal consequences (whether in the civil or the criminal field) can ensue. There is further guidance available from the LGA – please see the end of the document for the link.

Use of Social Media During Council Meetings

Use mobile devices sparingly, discreetly and with common sense at meetings. Take care to avoid extended periods of use which may give the impression that insufficient attention is being paid to the business of the meeting.

Do not use social media during quasi-judicial meetings or during confidential or exempt items of business.

Always ensure that devices are switched to silent during meetings and their use is not disturbing others.

Some Do's and Don'ts to ensure a positive social media experience

Social media is a really useful tool which can be used in a positive way to share information and generate healthy debates, however, there can be pitfalls, which can be avoided if you keep your online content objective, balanced, informative and accurate. As a Chorley Councillor, I commit to the following:

Some Do's

- To set appropriate privacy settings for my social media page/profile/account (especially if I have a private non-political account)
- To consider keeping my personal and elected member profile on social networking sites separate and maintain appropriate professional boundaries
- To be vigilant in looking out for defamatory or obscene or otherwise inappropriate posts from others on my social media page/profile/account and remove them as soon as possible to avoid any impression that I condone such comments – I shall accept responsibility for maintaining my social media page/profile/account
- To be careful about any connection with service users who are vulnerable adults or children as this could be regarded as a safeguarding issue
- To ensure that I seek permission to post information from a copyrighted source or any personal data
- To take care not to give the impression that I have already made up my mind before hearing all the evidence and arguments if I am involved in any planning, licensing or other quasi-judicial decision
- To keep posts positive as evidence suggests these are more popular and likely to generate more support for my cause than negative or critical messages
- To set an example by engaging in healthy & respectful debate which will encourage others to adopt similar online behaviours
- If the issue is a particularly sensitive one I shall carefully consider whether it is appropriate to discuss on social media
- In my role as a community leader I shall try to represent all communities and shall seek to avoid dividing communities

Some Don'ts

- I shall not post in haste, particularly if my judgement might be impaired (for example if I have consumed alcohol)
- Post comments that I would not be prepared to make face to face
- Use Council facilities for personal or political blogs
- Use social media to attack, insult, abuse, defame or make negative or discriminatory comments about anyone (including council staff, service users, fellow Councillors or the Council itself)
- Publish confidential information which I have gained access to as a Chorley Councillor

- Represent my personal views, or those of any political party or specialist interest group I belong to, as being those of the Council
- Distribute any material which could be considered inappropriate, offensive, illegal or discriminatory
- Robust political debate with other politicians is fine from time to time but I will not let it degenerate into personal attacks – my criticisms of my political opponents will be centred on policy differences, not personal issues
- Forget to consider my wider audience, online posts may be read by family who could be distressed at messages which had been intended for their parents or close relatives
- Make excessive use of social media technology during Council or Committee meetings as this may give the impression I am not engaged in the business of the meeting
- Use a false profile on social media for inappropriate reasons

Staying safe and dealing with Trolls

There is a section within the documents referenced below on this issue which members may find useful.

Local Government Association

The Local Government association has published guidance for Councillors. This can be accessed via their website here: <https://www.local.gov.uk/councillors-guide-handling-harassment-abuse-and-intimidation>.

Appended to this document is a short guidance document that the LGA in Wales has produced. Members may well find that document useful.

Further information can be found on their website here: [Social media guidance for councillors | WLGA Councillors Website Guide \(wlgacouncillorsguide.wales\)](#)

Finally...

Although you need to be aware of the potential risks most Councillors using social media engage with the public in an entirely constructive way without ever running foul of either the Code of Conduct or the Law. Use your common sense, relax and enjoy.



CLILC • WLGA

Social Media

A Guide for Councillors



Contact

Welsh Local Government Association

The WLGA's primary purposes are to promote a better local government, its reputation and to support authorities in the development of policies and priorities which will improve public service and democracy.

It represents the 22 local authorities in Wales with the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities as associate members.

Welsh Local Government Association

Local Government House

Drake Walk

Cardiff

CF10 4LG

Tel: 029 2046 8600

www.wlga.wales

We are indebted to the officers and members who have contributed to this guide, particularly in Denbighshire, Flintshire County Council on behalf of North Wales Local Authority Emergency Information Team Chairs. Lawyers in Local Government, the Heads of Democratic Services, Chairs of Democratic Services Committees, the MSO and Lead Members Network, guidance from the LGA and Scottish Improvement Service and The Office of the Welsh Language Commissioner. Also, to Kevin O'Keefe, then of Excelsa Interim Management & Consultancy Ltd, who contributed to the 2013 first edition of this guide.

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Introduction

Social media is changing the world.

It is changing the way we communicate, the way we receive our news and, increasingly, the way we think about ourselves and others. Social media is transforming politics too; it makes politicians and public institutions more accessible, allows individuals to have their voices heard and helps share ideas or promote campaigns, potentially to millions, in an instant.

It is a powerful tool that can do much good but, in the wrong hands, can cause harm too. The growth of online abuse or trolling is a concern, as is the mounting evidence that organisations or even foreign agencies can exploit social media or use 'fake news' to influence public opinion or even affect democratic contests¹.

Social media's influence is growing, not only are the number of active users increasing but it is also being used more effectively as a medium to communicate, engage and mobilise.

Social media has therefore become a vital tool for councils and councillors to inform and engage with the communities they serve.

Many councillors already use social media and many more are thinking about using it. As a councillor, there are additional things to consider when using it, including the Code of Conduct and managing expectations and workload.

This guidance offers advice for those councillors who are new to social media and some tips for those already using it. Social media is rapidly evolving, so this guidance offers a general overview, some key pointers and principles and references to step-by-step resources online.

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-39830727> and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-41355903>

1. What is social media?

Social media is a vast blanket term applied to a range of online multimedia tools; in short, social media allows you to communicate, broadcast or publish to millions in an instant, usually for free and all from a small device in the palm of your hand.

Social media can be set up and accessed via your smartphone, PC, laptop, tablet or smart TV. Social media applications (apps) or platforms allow you to communicate (either with individuals, specific groups or everyone), share information, share photos, create, edit and share audio or videos and play games with others.

Councils now use social media as a matter of course to communicate and consult with their residents who now expect this to be another communication channel, especially for urgent information. Council Twitter feeds include information on community events, school and road closures, job vacancies, sporting events and consultations, as well as details and, occasionally, detailed accounts of council meetings, including links to webcasts. Council scrutiny committees may also be using social media to promote and consult on their activities and undertake service reviews, such as in [Monmouthshire](#) and [Swansea](#).

Although there are some risks to using social media, which will be covered later in this guide, social media can be fun and innovative and can be used as an alternative method of communication and engagement, it can also break down barriers and stereotypes. Councils and other public bodies have used it for positive public relations, for example, it is worth looking at Swansea's [Faces of Swansea](#) social media campaign or the Twitter account [Love the Lagoon](#), or Torfaen's '[In the Depot](#)' video.

Some councils [have asked the public to name snow ploughs](#).

We have social media to thank for [Boaty McBoatface](#)!

Social media has a massive reach and some individuals (typically celebrities or national politicians) have many millions of followers. Social media is growing in usage too, an Office of National Statistics survey in 2017² showed that 66% of people in the UK had used social media in the last 3 months. It's not just younger people who use social media, further research by the ONS showed that that there is significant use across all age groups:

²<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/adhocs/007401socialnetworkingbyagegroup2011to2017>

Age	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	All
%	96	88	83	68	51	27	66

According to Ofcom³, in 2017:



84%
OF WELSH HOUSEHOLDS
HAD ACCESS TO THE
INTERNET



74%
OF ADULTS USED
A SMARTPHONE



21 Hours
ON AVERAGE SPENT
ONLINE EVERY WEEK BY
WELSH INTERNET USERS

Facebook and Twitter are the most widely used social media platforms and therefore the most relevant to councillors. According to Twitter⁴, and Facebook⁵ there are:



AN ESTIMATED
17.1m
TWITTER USERS
IN UK



30m
FACEBOOK USERS IN THE UK
ON MOBILES ALONE...
AND OVER 2.20bn MONTHLY
ACTIVE USERS WORLDWIDE

This guide will therefore focus on Facebook and Twitter for councillors, and will touch on other platforms too.

³ https://www.ofcom.org.uk_data/assets/pdf_file/0027/104985/cmr-2017-wales.pdf

⁴ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/271350/twitter-users-in-the-united-kingdom-uk/>

⁵ <https://zephoria.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/>

Blogs

A blog (an abbreviation of “web-log”) is essentially an online journal with your latest posts appearing first. It can be a journal of diary entries, thoughts or ideas or somewhere to publish more detailed articles on particular issues. Anyone can add comments to your blog and you can use the site to link or draw attention to other online comments or sources of information. Blogs are most effective when they are regularly maintained and updated.

Blogs tend to be included as part of an existing website or via Facebook, which means it’s easier to promote and encourage broader feedback.

Some leaders or chairs produce blogs via their council websites, for example in [Caerphilly](#), [Rhondda Cynon Taf](#), and [Chairman of Denbighshire County Council](#).

Other councillors publish their own, for example:

- [Cllr Peter Black](#)
- [Deputy Lord Mayor of Swansea 2018-2019](#)
- [Cllr Neil Prior](#)

Keep at it!

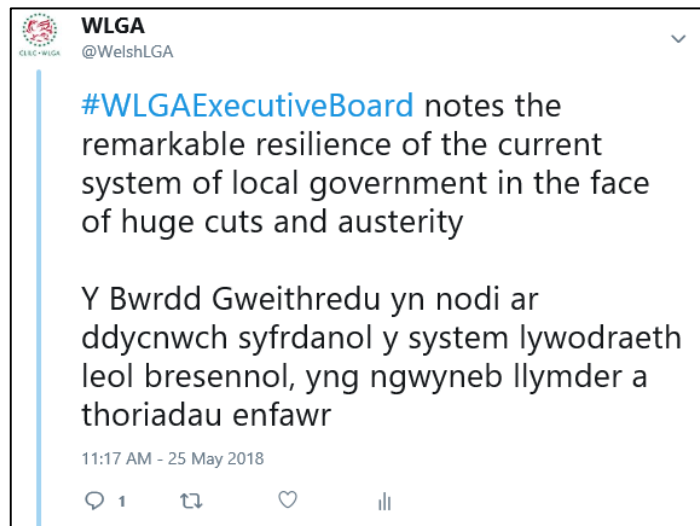
As with all social media, if you start blogging, it’s best to keep it up and keep it up-to-date; all it takes is for someone to find your last blog entry of some years ago and they can criticise you by saying ‘you have nothing else to say’ or ‘you have no new ideas’. If you do stop blogging, think about archiving the material or moving it over to a new social media platform.



Twitter is technically a micro-blog. Twitter allows you to post information, news, photos or videos in messages that are known as **tweets**. Twitter enables you to **follow** people, organisations, news or information that you are interested in and post information and messages of your own. People or organisations in turn can follow you, so they can see all of your tweets; you can even adjust the settings to allow you to be alerted when someone you’re particularly interested in tweets.

Tweets are each limited to 280 characters (characters include letters, numbers, punctuation and spaces). Tweets are not a private means of communication and can be seen by anyone who is following you.

For example:



You can **like** or **retweet** information and someone else's tweets that you would like to pass on to others. For example:



Conversations on the same theme on Twitter are called **threads**. You can search for tweets on a subject that you are interested in by typing your subject into the search box.

Tweets on the same theme are drawn together using **hashtags**. People use the hashtag symbol (#) before a relevant keyword or phrase in their tweet to categorise those tweets and help them show more easily in a Twitter search. Clicking on a hash tagged word in any message shows you other Tweets that include that hashtag.

You can have a private conversation or create a group conversation with anyone who follows you by using the **Direct Message** option. Anyone you do not follow can also send you a Direct

Warning

As a politician, others may consider your tweets 'fair game'. A good rule of thumb is not to commit anything to social media that could at some point be used against you. Even your retweets can be perceived as something you endorse or support.

As with emails, although Direct Messages are private and you may trust the recipients, they can become public if leaked!

Here are some examples of councillors' Twitter accounts:

[@LeaderNewport](#)

[@CllrRobJames](#)

[@PeterFox61](#)

[@Cllrjuliefallon](#)

[@CllrSaif](#)

[@CllrFionaCross](#)

[@elinmwi](#)

[@DebbieWallice](#)

[@Alun_Williams](#)

[@CllrJoshuaPlaid](#)

[@CllrLisaMytton](#)

[@PriorNeil](#)

And some useful organisations:

[@WelshLGA](#)

[@LGAComms](#)

[@WelshGovernment](#)

[@WG_localgov](#)

[@AssemblyWales](#)

[@BBCWalesNews](#)

Message, if you have opted to receive Direct Messages from anyone or you have previously sent that person a Direct Message.

You can **block** or **mute** accounts on Twitter. Once an account has been blocked, those accounts cannot follow you and you cannot follow them. However, even those you have blocked can still access your account through a third party who follows you.

All the details about how twitter works and how you can set up an account can be found [here](#).



Facebook is the most extensively used social network in the world. Essentially, it allows you to easily create your own webpage or group, or an interactive newsletter about you, your life, your interests and friends.

Have a look at these councillors' pages

- [Councillor Neil Prior](#)
- [Councillor Dhanisha Patel](#)
- [Councillor Matthew Dorrance](#)
- [Councillor Steve Churchman](#)

And these authority pages:

- [Wrexham Council](#)
- [Isle of Anglesey County Council](#)
- [Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council](#)
- [Snowdonia National Park](#)
- [Flintshire County Council](#)
- [Vale of Glamorgan Council](#)

To use Facebook, you'll need to create a profile - a **Timeline** where you might add a photo, describe yourself, what you do and your interests. You can also describe your **Status** which would inform your friends about how you are feeling or what you are doing at any given time. You can update this as often as you like.

On Facebook, you can invite people to be your **Friends** and set different levels of access to your account. Some people can see all the information about you or you can make less detail available to others. You can also use Facebook to communicate with groups or individuals. People who find your page, comments or proposals of interest can **Like** you or your latest post, which encourages further use, and is a useful way of taking a straw poll of your ideas. People can also add a **Comment** on your post or **Share** your post on their own timelines.

You may wish to set up a Facebook page about your community, to promote events, announcements or your council activities; many councils and councillors do this and it can be a very effective method to engage and seek views from the community. You should be prepared to receive challenge and criticism however, as it is an open forum and not everyone will agree with your ideas or views; you can however set rules, moderate and edit other people's posts if their language or content is offensive or inappropriate.

You can also set up a Facebook group. When you [create a group](#), you can decide whether to make it publicly available for anyone to join, require administrator approval for members to join or keep it private and by invitation only.

You can send private notes to any "friend" you're connected with on Facebook; they can only be seen by the person to whom they're sent; Facebook's **Messenger** app is increasingly popular. You can also **'Live Chat'** on Facebook. This is a real-time conversation with any of your Facebook friends who happen to be online and signed in at the same time as you are.

Crucially, Facebook lets each user control who can see their personal information and what they post on the network. You can set the level of privacy for different categories of your information and posts and extend different levels of permission to different people who view your site. As a member you might want to differentiate between what you show your close friends and family and members of the public. Find out more and join Facebook [here](#).



WhatsApp is a free messaging app which also allows you to have traditional 'phone conversations'. It is very popular as it allows you to set up groups of friends or colleagues to keep them updated on a particular theme. It may be a quick and easy way, for example, of keeping your political group up to date on key issues. You can download the app from various app stores or visit [the website](#).



YouTube is a video sharing platform. Videos are easy to record via a smartphone and are more easily distributed via Twitter or Facebook, however, some people prefer to use YouTube and it is increasingly being used by councils to post information. Here are some examples:

[Cardiff](#)

[Conwy](#)

[Gwynedd](#)

[Monmouthshire](#)

[Powys](#)

2. Why you may find social media useful

Social media will allow you to open new conversations with the people you represent, and the potential for councillors using social media is huge. Social media allows you to be innovative and responsive as well as providing links to useful sources of information or sign-posting to other organisations.

Don't ignore social media – it's there and won't go away! People are already online and it's growing, and people increasingly expect their councillors to be contactable via social media. If you're not involved people may bypass you or may even 'talk about you' and you'll be missing out on a useful source of intelligence.

- It's a useful way of finding out what people are talking about locally, their concerns and interests.
- It's useful for finding out about breaking news, the latest research or publication or the latest policy announcements from political parties.
- It's a good way of making the electorate more aware of the work you do personally.
- It can help make you appear more human and down-to-earth! People often don't understand what councillors do and may have negative perceptions, but social media can give people a taste of your personal life and remind them that you are just like them, with similar interests – you do need to consider balance though and how much of your personal life you want in the public domain: for example - do you want strangers to be able to identify your family and friends?
- It's an effective way of coordinating campaigns, for example, mobilising support and interest and gathering followers, you can also allow campaign workers access to your Facebook account to post on your, or your campaign's, behalf to share the workload.
- It allows you to have a conversation with a range of people that you would never be able to physically meet and who do not traditionally seek out their local representatives.
- It allows for immediate communication. You can pass on information and receive opinions in minutes. You can forward information from other people equally quickly. "Going Viral" refers to a mass spreading of a piece of information around the world – but be careful, only share information you are confident is correct, Fake News is damaging and there is the risk of defamation if you spread falsehoods.

- The local and sometimes national press will follow councillors on Twitter or Facebook. Social media is a growing source for stories for news outlets as each tweet or comment is effectively a mini-press release. Journalists will know what you are talking about the minute you talk about it.
- Social media is mobile. You can take it around your community, on the train, or to a coffee shop. You can upload pictures and videos, showing for example your role in local events, pictures of potential sites for development, new buildings, local eyesores - a picture tells a thousand words.
- It's free and you probably already have the equipment you need. All you need is time.
- You can receive immediate feedback on your ideas and manifesto to allow you to modify your proposals in line with local thinking.
- Above all, it can be a lot of fun!

What are the drawbacks?

- Having a social media presence means that people can contact you 24/7. This is great in terms of accessibility but means that they may expect you to reply immediately. Technology and social media has raised expectations, people often expect a speedy response and resolution to their query; this expectation, coupled with the fact that social media shows everyone how responsive you are, can create more pressure.
- Using social media can become addictive, many people find themselves answering messages late into the night because they just can't put it down.
- Similarly, too much weight can be given to what goes on in the 'Twittersphere'; sections of Twitter are often described as 'echo chambers' – it may only be a couple of people with a limited number of followers with strong views on a subject who are 'bouncing' off each other – they may be in the minority and not be representative - the rest of the community or the rest of society may be blissfully unaware or may not think in the same way!
- People can post false information, insults or messages that you would not want to be associated with on your social media platforms. These can be spread rapidly via social media.

- Some people say things via social media that they would not say to your face, it's an easy way of taking personal pot shots at councillors. People making these comments are often called 'Trolls' and may not be interested in facts, just in attacking you.
- Councillors, and in particular women councillors, are increasingly the subject of online abuse, bullying and harassment on social media.
- The WLGA has produced a [separate guide](#) on how to deal with online abuse.

It's easier said than done, but try not to get too concerned about what's said online...

You are likely to receive criticism at some point and trolls may try to rile you, but often they will have few followers and their comments may not be seen by many people. Keep calm and the best advice is to ignore, often trolls will crawl back under their bridge...if it does get serious, you can report it

Are you controlling your social media use or is it controlling you?

Recent research has recognised that some people feel out of control in their use of social media⁶.

Ask yourself how comfortable you feel if you cannot access your social media accounts. It is important for councillors to bear in mind that even if the rest of the world seems to be online 24/7, you don't have to be. Being a councillor is a professional role and you can decide how available you want to make yourself. There are some common recommendations for managing your time in front of a screen and you may want to consider some of these:

Top tips to manage social media use

- Establish a routine, check your messages at the same time every day rather than responding to the 'ping' of every new message arriving
- Looking at a screen can disrupt your sleep patterns, consider turning off all screens two hours before going to bed and make the bedroom a screen free zone
- When you are with your residents face to face, give them your undivided attention to help you focus on what's happening where you are and not appear rude.

⁶ <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20180118-how-much-is-too-much-time-on-social-media>

3. Getting started

A good place to start is to contact your Democratic Services officers and find out what support and training is available.

Choose your medium and sign up. Signing up is very straightforward and will take you less than five minutes! Facebook and Twitter are good places to start.

If you don't already have an account, ask a colleague, friend or family member for advice, ask them to show you how they use social media. You might want to begin with a trial personal account (rather than calling yourself "Councillor Jones") and experiment with family and friends. Make sure that you understand how people find you and who can access your material.

Remember:

On Facebook you can control who has access to different parts of your account. You can manage what the world sees and what your "friends" see.

On Twitter the whole world can see everything you tweet. You can '**Protect my Tweets**', which essentially makes your tweets private to only your current followers, but that defeats the object of using Twitter to engage more widely.

When you are ready to set up your final account, consider the identity you use. The name you give yourself online is important as it allows people to find you. Prefacing your Twitter account with Cllr lets people know exactly who you are and indicates that the Code of Conduct will apply.

Consider:

- Different councillors have different views, but you might want to consider setting up a separate personal and "councillor" account, at least at first - you can talk about the amazing food in the restaurant around the corner to your friends and followers in your informal account, and the plans for the new bypass to your friends and followers on your councillor account.

Separate accounts can help you manage some of the online trolling that is likely to come your way as a councillor – it can be a way of keeping your home life and councillor life separate.

However, many councillors think that some of their personal comments about food, places they've visited, football matches or TV helps break down perceptions of councillors and proves that they are normal like everyone else!

- Make it easy for people to find you online. Many people will start their search for the area that you represent, so make sure you mention your location frequently as this will then be picked up by search engines. You will also want to make sure that your social media account details are on your business cards, posters and flyers.
- Increase your social media following by following other people, retweeting other people's tweets, liking tweets or posts or commenting on people's Facebook posts. Find people on Twitter with links to your community, county or region or with similar interests by searching using the 'hashtag' (#) symbol to prefix your search term for example #llandrindod, #powys #midwales.
- Reach more people on Twitter by timing your tweets when the audience you want to reach are online. Ask your friends for a retweet, use hashtags and include photos for a larger and more noticeable post.
- Be disciplined about making time available to write new content and answer your "friends" and "followers" at a regular time each week to update your Facebook status and throughout the day to check Twitter. If you use your mobile phone, you can set notifications to alert you each time you are mentioned in a tweet.
- If you do not want to be available every hour of the day or night, tell people when your account will be checked, for example you might add "available 9.00-7.00 weekdays" on your profile.
- Decide on what you are going to talk about and how. This could be
 - Weekly updates of your own activities as a councillor - don't forget your pictures! This works better on Facebook as you can include more detail. Remember a tweet is only 280 characters and tends to be more instant and timely.
 - Regular updates on council policies and actions of interest to your community.
 - Links and re-tweets of other relevant national activities.
 - Issues on which you would like feedback.
 - Notice of events and public meetings.

- Using social media is all about two-way communication, it's good for providing information to your community or flagging up press statements, but it's better as a tool to get useful feedback. You will get feedback and you should expect some people to challenge your ideas or enter into a debate with you online. This is part and parcel of social media.
- Keep your communications clear, positive, polite and professional. Plain language helps. Many people use abbreviations on Twitter – you'll pick these up as you go along!
- On Facebook, you will need to monitor and, if necessary, censor the contributions that other people make to your page; or group and delete them if they do not match your required standards of behaviour or language. Defamatory and offensive language could be attributed to the publisher (that's you!) as well as the original author and could incur financial liability. It is up to you to decide if you want to remove posts that disagree with your political position, however if you do remove them you may be accused of censoring contributions on political grounds.
- It is up to you to decide if you want to remove posts that disagree with your political position, however if you do remove them you may be accused of censoring contributions on political grounds.
- Bear in mind that constituents may find party political point scoring tedious and prefer to hear information about what you are achieving.
- If appropriate, consider setting up an account for your ward with your fellow ward members – this way you can share the administrative tasks.
- If you don't have anything to say...don't say anything. Even though it's tempting to let your followers know how busy you are they will soon become bored with constant updates on your day without some relevant or interesting information.

Monitoring social media

It can be difficult to keep on top of what's happening online; people are posting and tweeting all the time and if you are following many people or organisations, social media can become 'noisy' and you could miss things of interest or significance.

A quick way to check up on things on Twitter is to visit the Twitter page of some of your favourite people, organisations or news outlets to see what they've been saying. You could also search for a particular theme or issue with a hashtag#.

If you're keen to find out what people are saying about you, your local area or local council for example, there are social media management applications that you can use such as [Hootsuite](#) or [Buffer](#). These are simple to set up and use and can allow you to see how often people read or retweet your tweets. It also allows you to schedule tweets, for example, to send a pre-prepared tweet at a certain time of day.

The Welsh Language

As a councillor you will want to use and promote the Welsh language and culture as much as possible. There are also legal requirements which apply to the use of the Welsh language on social media. How these rules apply, depends on the type of work you are doing and which of the Welsh Language Standards apply to your local authority.

When you are representing your local authority, the same standards will apply to you as they do to officers. So, if you are, for example, a cabinet member tweeting about a new policy decision, a mayor blogging about your recent activities on behalf of the council, the chair of a scrutiny committee undertaking a formal consultation on behalf of the committee or letting people know about the forward work programme of the committee, then you may be subject to the standards which apply to the officers in your authority.

This may mean that your communication, including responses to messages, must be translated and the content and format of the message must treat the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language. Your authority will provide you with guidelines for how your local Welsh language standards apply when you are representing the authority – if you are in any doubt, it's best to contact the council for guidance.

If you are acting in the capacity of a ward member, acting on behalf of individuals or communities then the same rules apply as if you were a member of the public. So, regardless of your role on the council, if you are tweeting about a local fete, commenting on a council decision in, for example, your role on a local pressure group, or retweeting a complaint about pot holes then you may communicate in the language of your choice.

The exception to this is when you are communicating in relation to an activity for which you are using council resources (beyond the standard remuneration and equipment provided to you as a member) for example council buildings for a community meeting.

Some of the [practical guidance](#) in the Welsh Language Commissioner's guide for businesses and charities about using Welsh on social media may be useful.

4. Staying safe and dealing with trolls

Some form of online disagreement and criticism is inevitable and, if you're not online, you or your policies may already be subject to debate without you. Disagreement and challenge is a key feature of democratic debate, however, online it can easily spill over into abuse or harassment.

You will therefore need to prepare yourself for some uncomfortable reading, which may cause some upset. You cannot prevent online abuse, but you can take control of how and whether you respond and, if it becomes serious, you can report it.

The WLGA has produced separate guidance on dealing with online abuse which you may find useful. You can read it [here](#).

Some advice

- **Take Control**

Decide for yourself and make it clear on your homepage what you expect from people who are engaging with you on social media. You might say, for example, that whilst you welcome an open and frank exchange of views, any inappropriate comments will be removed and that any comment which is libellous or threatening or becomes harassment will be reported.

- **Remember that you don't have to put up with abuse or harassment just because you are a political figure**

Be prepared to 'Mute', 'Block' or 'Unfriend' abusive users from your account or ask them to remove comments. If a comment crosses the line into abuse or harassment you can report this to Facebook or Twitter or even the police.

- **Respond or ignore?**

When faced with an abusive comment give yourself some time to decide whether to respond or ignore it. Trolls often have few followers or few followers of significance – if you reply it can lead to a tit for tat argument fuelling further confrontation and provides the troll with the "oxygen of publicity" or the satisfaction of seeing you riled. Chances are you'll have far more followers than the troll, so if you reply, all of your followers will be aware of the troll's original tweet. Ignoring the comment can lead to short term allegations of dodging an issue but may succeed in the long term.

Don't feed the troll!

- **Stay calm and polite**

Not every criticism is from a troll – sometimes a frustrated member of the public may be critical or angry with you initially on social media, particularly if they are trying to resolve a council service issue. If you respond constructively, their tone will change and they may even apologise or show you appreciation online.

Bear in mind that for every troll there will be many more legitimate and sensible followers. Think of them when you respond. One approach is to respond with facts only or to refer the troll to a longer factual statement about the situation or a set of “frequently asked questions” that you can post to pre-empt queries. You might want to invite the troll to a public meeting. They may find it harder to be abusive in public. You may also want to remind the troll that you are more than happy to have a political debate in your role as a councillor but that personal comments about you or your family are unacceptable.

The [Facebook](#) and [Twitter Help Pages](#) have full details about how to block users and how to report abuse

A Criminal Offence?

If someone sends threatening, abusive or offensive messages they may be committing an offence. If you receive a message which you consider falls into this category, do not respond to it, check out the guidance provided by the [police](#) and [CPS](#) and if appropriate report it.

5. Support from the council

A good place to start is to contact your Democratic Services officers and find out what support and training is available

Councillors are generally provided with the ICT equipment that they need to do their job. The Independent Remuneration Panel expects that this will include equipment, support and training.

It is also reasonable to expect that you should have access to social media sites via council ICT equipment to enable you to carry out your councillor role more effectively. You do not need the council to set you up with a personal social media account, but you should take advantage of any training or guidance provided to help you use it properly.

Most councils have a social media policy. You will need to abide by this and any social media protocols that may have been agreed when using your "councillor" account.

It's worth remembering that the council is responsible for any information provided on its website and is subject to legal responsibilities. **You** are personally responsible for the material that you broadcast via your own social media accounts or websites – but more of this later.

Advice will be available to you from a number of council officers. The Monitoring Officer, Head of Democratic Services, the Communications Team and the ICT Manager are likely to have useful advice.

Using social media in an emergency

During emergencies (such as severe weather events, pollution incidents or major fires) partner agencies such as local authorities, police, health, Natural Resources Wales and fire and rescue services will use social media to provide information to help people prepare, keep them informed and to signpost where they can get help.

It's important during these situations that the most up to date and correct information is communicated to the public and the partner agencies will coordinate the content and timing of the information to be provided.

In an emergency situation, the council will also identify an official spokesperson - an officer or a senior member - who will use the approved information to speak on behalf of the council.

It's always best in these circumstances to restrict your own social media activity to sharing official communications from the partner agencies responding to the situation.

For more information about how your council operates in these circumstances please contact your council's civil contingencies team so that you know what to do in an emergency.

6. Social media and council meetings

Your council's social media policy and/or council constitution will provide you with guidance about if and when you can use social media during council meetings. Other than what your constitution or social media policy says, there is no legal reason why you shouldn't use social media during meetings. However, some common sense does need to apply.

Tweeting on meeting progress and receiving comments from the community can be helpful for transparency and engagement BUT excessive use of Twitter may give people the impression that you are not concentrating on the business in hand or are even relying on guidance from outside the meeting. For that reason, it is probably sensible not to use Twitter during a planning or licensing debate. Committee chairs may want to decide how to address this in their meetings and you should abide by the rules set out in your constitution.

Many politicians tweet their contributions or questions to meetings or debates to keep their followers informed of how they're representing their communities' interests. Remember, you may not need to tweet about the detail of a meeting if the meeting is being webcast. Your council may have official" twitter feeds for live on-line conversations to run alongside the meeting webcast.

Remember that you should not tweet or communicate in any way the content of exempt or confidential business dealt with by local authorities in closed session such as when making formal appointments.

7. Golden rules

- Think before you tweet or post on Facebook. Do not say anything, post views or opinions that you would not be prepared to:
 - Discuss face to face with the person you are speaking about.
 - Write on a placard and carry down your high street and discuss and defend with anyone who sees it.
 - Be prepared to have minuted in a public meeting – remember, Twitter or Facebook effectively publicly minutes everything for you as you go along!
- Remember that once you have said something it may be seen by millions - friends, supporters, political opponents and the press and could be re-tweeted around the world in minutes.
- Keep your messages professional, polite and positive.
- Remember to try to keep tweets and texts separate – many people tweet comments that they would have texted to someone privately before the advent of social media; this may be about meeting up later (do you want all your followers knowing your plans and gate-crashing your lunch!?) through to 'in' jokes or banter that could be misinterpreted.
- Exercise discretion when choosing who to follow on Twitter or 'befriend' on Facebook, for example, some council employees might find it a bit uncomfortable or inappropriate to have a councillor hanging on their every word. If you follow or are Facebook "friends" with council employees, contractors who have been procured to provide services to the council, a company or member of the public making a planning application or pressure groups, this might be construed as having a close personal association with them and therefore a personal interest.
- If you make a mistake admit it. Mistakes happen so don't try to cover it up as there will always be a record of what you've said.

Warning

Don't discuss casework on social media or encourage people to contact you about issues that might be personal to them.

Encourage them to use more secure channels.

- Don't tweet or post on Facebook when you are "tired or emotional"! It's probably sensible to turn off your phone at any time when you think your judgement may be impaired. Even if you exercise social media control, other people will still have their smart phones, so may post a photo or video of you 'enjoying yourself'; you need to let your hair down, but it's just one extra thing to consider as a councillor in the age of social media.
- As with your own leaflets or newsletters, ask permission before taking a picture that you intend to use. NEVER take photos of children without the express permission of their parents based on an understanding of what you intend to use the picture for. Your council will have a policy on taking pictures of children, take advice on this before taking or using pictures.
- Do not allow anyone else access to your social media accounts. Protect your passwords and use robust, unique passwords and change them regularly especially if you use a public or shared computer.
- Just like email, you can be hacked on social media! Be wary about direct messages via Twitter, even from people you know, with messages such as 'Hi, have you seen this photo of you on Twitter?' Delete these before opening, as the spam could then be sent to all of the people you are following. Do not open videos or links on, for example, Facebook Messenger if you are not expecting them. It could be a hack.
- If you had a social media account **before you were elected as a councillor**, it may be sensible to review your historical posts through the lens of your new 'political reputation' as well as the expectations of the code of conduct. You may have posted personal photos of social occasions, shared jokes, retweeted videos or made or re-posted political views that you may no longer agree with. If people see such historical posts, it may cause embarrassment or reputational damage not only to yourself but also to the council. It could even be referred to the Ombudsman as a potential breach of the Code of Conduct. Bear in mind that although you posted your comments before you were a councillor, your social media account is essentially still broadcasting them, and they may still be re-posted by other people.

THINK before you post; even if you later delete your post, someone may have already taken a screen shot.

CHECK before you share or retweet information. Is it true? Who said it and why?

Do you trust the source?

8. Keep on the right side of the law...

Councillors new to social media tend to be concerned about the legal implications. It is an important consideration, and some councillors and other politicians have fallen foul of the law, but with careful use and following some ground-rules you will be fine!

The style of communication employed in the social media environment tends to be fast and informal. Messages can appear lightweight and transitory.

Whenever you post something on social media, it becomes a publication, you have effectively made a broadcast. As it is now in the public domain, it is subject to both the **Code of Conduct** and to various **laws**.

Code of Conduct

If you conduct yourself on Twitter or Facebook as you would in person on the street or in your leaflets, then you will be fine.

Remember that according to guidance from the Ombudsman, the Code of Conduct applies to you whenever you are "Conducting the business of your authority, acting, claiming to act or give the impression you are acting in your official capacity as a member or representative of your authority" Also the Code applies if you "Conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or your authority into disrepute"⁷

If you can be identified as a councillor when you are using social media, either by your account name or how you describe yourself or by what you comment upon and how you comment, the requirements of the Code of Conduct apply. If you say something that could be regarded as bringing your office or authority into disrepute the Code applies even if you are not apparently acting in your official capacity or do not identify yourself as a member.

Remember that the Ombudsman's guidance states that "Making unfair or inaccurate criticism of your authority in a public arena might well be regarded as bringing your authority into disrepute"

⁷ <https://www.ombudsman.wales/guidance-policies/>

In the same way that you are required to act in council meetings or in your communities you should:

- **Show respect for others** - do not use social media to be rude or disrespectful
- Not disclose confidential information about people or the council
- **Not bully or intimidate others** - repeated negative comments about or to individuals could be interpreted as bullying or intimidation
- Not try to secure a benefit for yourself or a disadvantage for others
- **Abide by the laws of equality** - do not publish anything that might be seen as racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic, anti-faith or offensive to any of the groups with protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010. Even as a joke or "tongue in cheek"

Predetermination

As a councillor, you are aware that when you act in a quasi-judicial capacity, for example on a planning or licensing committee, you should not make up your mind about an issue that is to be formally decided upon before you had heard all the relevant information. You are allowed to be predisposed to a particular view but not to have gone so far as to have predetermined your position.

It is important to remember therefore, that anything relevant you might have said about particular issues on social media could be used as evidence of your having made up your mind in advance of hearing all the relevant information.

Don't become a troll yourself!

Social media is a great tool for councillors to challenge and scrutinise, but always think about what you are saying, how you are saying it, how often and about whom. If you are perceived to be too aggressive or too confrontational or too frequent, it could begin to damage your reputation, undermine your relationship with colleagues or you could risk breaching the Code of Conduct in terms of bullying, intimidation or lack of respect for others.

It's therefore not appropriate for you to use social media to criticise your council's officers, who often will not be in a position to defend or respond publicly.

Many councils have apps or member referral services; it is often best to use these mechanisms to request council services or report local concerns as you are likely to receive a resolution to your request.

Criminal Offences

Don't panic! These generally apply to you already in your conduct as a councillor, but it is worth considering them as they apply to social media:

Harassment - It is a criminal offence to repeatedly pursue a campaign against someone where this is likely to cause alarm, harassment nuisance or distress.

Data Protection and the General Data Protection Regulation. - It is illegal to publish personal data about individuals unless they have given you their consent. This might apply to your constituents or service users. As a councillor you are a data controller in your own right and therefore personally responsible for what you publish. Make sure you understand the requirements of the GDPR and Data Protection Act. There is more information about this [here](#).

Contact the Data Protection Officer in your council for more information.

Incitement - It is a criminal offence to incite any criminal act.

Discrimination and Racially Aggravated Offences (or any other protected Characteristic) - It is a criminal offence to make a discriminatory remark about anyone based on a "Protected Characteristic" as defined in The Equality Act 2010 (such as their race, religion, sexual orientation etc).

Malicious & Obscene Communications - It is a criminal offence to send malicious or obscene communications.

Remember

If you receive a message or someone posts something on your page that you consider to be unsuitable remove it as soon as possible. If you "like" or appear to endorse or retweet a message or image you are regarded as having published it, and will face any legal consequences. It is therefore important to regularly check and moderate any site on which others can post. If you are in any doubt about how to deal with a message you receive, consult your Monitoring Officer.

Civil Law

This is where things get riskier for anyone who uses Twitter or Facebook, whether they are councillors, members of the public or celebrities:

Defamation - It is against the law to make a false statement about someone which damages their personal or professional reputation. **Crucially - even if you simply retweet or pass on information originally posted by others, you may still be held equally as responsible as the original commentator.** This can also apply to publishing images. If found liable to another person, you could be ordered to pay large sums of money as damages.

Copyright - The legal ownership of the contents of documents, photos, videos and music belong to the person who created them. You could be in breach of copyright if you reproduce such material without the owner's permission. Always ask for written consent before you use someone else's material.

Political Comment and Electioneering - Remember that although it is acceptable to make political points or canvass votes via your own social media accounts this will not be permissible if you are using this via council supplied computer equipment, certainly in the run-up to elections. The Electoral Commission has further information about the return on expenditure that candidates need to provide on advertising or campaign literature.

Beware of Fake News!

Social media is breeding ground for fake news or 'click bait' (where a deliberately salacious headline with a link tries to draw you in, often to a very mundane news item accompanied by lots of pop-up adverts); view all news or gossip with a discerning eye – it could be embarrassing if you retweet or promote fake news and, worse, you could be breaking the law if you circulate false statements about someone, even if you are just retweeting something someone else has posted.

9. Further information, interesting sites and sources of help

Bear in mind that information, sites and terminology change quickly. The next big social media platform will soon be on its way. Here are some current examples of information and useful sites but bear in mind that they may be quickly out of date.

Social Media websites

[Sign up to Twitter here](#)

[Sign up to Facebook here](#)

[Social Media Checklist for Councillors](#) (Local Government Association)

[#FollowMe - A guide to social media for elected members in Scotland](#)
(Scottish Improvement Service)

[Nextdoor](#) is a social network for neighbourhoods where people who live within the same or neighbouring communities can share information, organise events and take opinion polls. It's a useful platform for members to raise awareness and tap into what is interesting or concerning local residents.

10. Links

Here is a list of the links that were used in this guide:

Monmouthshire County Council - https://twitter.com/Mon_CC_Scrutiny

Swansea Council - <https://twitter.com/SwanseaScrutiny>

'Faces of Swansea Council 2018' Twitter campaign - <https://twitter.com/hashtag/facesofswanseaouncil2018>

Love the Lagoon - <https://twitter.com/lovethelagoon?lang=en>

'In the Depot' campaign, Torfaen County Borough Council - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G6UerjFCLdI>

Naming gritting lorries, BBC News - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-42026485>

Public using social media to choose the name 'Boaty McBoatface', BBC News - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-36064659>

Blogs

Caerphilly County Borough Council Leader's blog - <http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/My-Council/Councillors-and-committees/Leader-s-blog>

Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council Leader's blog - <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/TheLeadersBlog/RhonddaCynonTafCouncilLeadersBlog.aspx>

Denbighshire County Council Chairman blog - <https://denbighshirecouncilchairman.wordpress.com/>

Cllr Peter Black - <http://peterblack.blogspot.com/>

Deputy Lord Mayor of Swansea 2018-19 - <http://swanseamayoralmusing.blogspot.com/>

Cllr Neil Prior - <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/year-county-councillor-surviving-thriving-elected-life-neil-prior/?published=t>

Councillor Twitter accounts

Cllr Debbie Wilcox - <https://www.twitter.com/LeaderNewport>

Cllr Rob James - <https://twitter.com/CllrRobJames>

Cllr Peter Fox - <https://twitter.com/PeterFox61>

Cllr Julie Fallon - <https://twitter.com/Cllrjuliefallon>

Cllr Saifur Rahaman - <https://twitter.com/CllrSaif>

CLlr Fiona Cross - <https://twitter.com/CLlrFionaCross>

CLlr Elin Walker Jones - <https://twitter.com/elinmwj>

CLlr Debbie Wallice - <https://twitter.com/DebbieWallice>

CLlr Alun Williams - https://twitter.com/Alun_Williams

CLlr Joshua Davies - <https://twitter.com/CLlrJoshuaPlaid>

CLlr Lisa Mytton - <https://twitter.com/CLlrLisaMytton>

Useful organisations' Twitter accounts

Welsh Local Government Association - <https://www.twitter.com/WelshLGA>

Local Government Association - <https://www.twitter.com/LGAComms>

Welsh Government - <https://www.twitter.com/WelshGovernment>

Local Government Section, Welsh Government - https://www.twitter.com/WG_localgov

National Assembly for Wales - <https://www.twitter.com/AssemblyWales>

BBC Wales News - <https://www.twitter.com/BBCWalesNews>

Councillor Facebook pages

CLlr Neil Prior - <https://www.facebook.com/cllrneilprior/>

CLlr Dhanisha Patel - <http://www.facebook.com/dhanisha4ogmore/>

CLlr Matthew Dorrance - <https://www.facebook.com/CLlrMatthewDorrance/>

CLlr Steve Churchman - <https://www.facebook.com/councillorstevechurchman/>

Local Authority Facebook pages

Wrexham Council - <http://www.facebook.com/wrexhamcouncil/>

Isle of Anglesey County Council - <http://www.facebook.com/IOACC/>

Snowdonia National Park - <https://en-gb.facebook.com/visitsnowdonia>

Flintshire County Council - <https://www.facebook.com/Flintshire-County-Council-124912774260207/>

Vale of Glamorgan Council - <https://www.facebook.com/valeofglamorgancouncil/>

Council YouTube pages

Cardiff Council - <https://www.youtube.com/user/cardiffcouncil/featured>

Conwy County Borough Council - <https://www.youtube.com/user/ConwyWeb>

Gwynedd Council - <https://www.youtube.com/user/CyngorGwynedd>

Monmouthshire County Council -

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZHCKKCI7DqtxDabOkj_Esg/featured

Powys County Council - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCop_U-YVW7OB0jRIt3b8f1Q

Social media support pages

Facebook support pages - <https://en-gb.facebook.com/help/tools>

Twitter support pages - <https://help.twitter.com/en/safety-and-security/cyber-bullying-and-online-abuse>

Welsh Language

Welsh Language Commissioner guidelines on using the Welsh language on social media -

<http://www.comisiynyddygydraeg.cymru/hybu/SiteCollectionDocuments/Using%20Welsh%20on%20Social%20Media%20SA.pdf>

Guidelines

WLGA Councillors' Guide to Handling Online Abuse -

<http://www.wlga.wales/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=62&mid=665&fileid=1504>

Police social media guidelines - <https://www.askthe.police.uk/content/Q770.htm>

Crown Prosecution Service guidelines on social media communications -

http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/a_to_c/communications_sent_via_social_media/

The General Data Protection Regulation - Information for Councillors, WLGA -

<https://www.wlga.wales/gdpr-information-for-councillors>

Local Government Association (LGA) social media guidelines -

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/comms-hub-communications-support/digital-communications/social-1>

Scottish Improvement Service Social Media guide for elected members -

http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/documents/elected_members/follow-me-guide-to-social-media-for-elected-members.pdf

Useful links for social media websites

Twitter - <https://twitter.com/>

Facebook - <https://en-gb.facebook.com/>

Nextdoor - https://nextdoor.co.uk/about_us/

WhatsApp - <http://www.whatsapp.com/>

Hootsuite - <https://hootsuite.com/>

Buffer - <https://buffer.com/>

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