

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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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

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