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|  Standards Committee 12th February 2019 | | Agenda Item No. 7 |
| Title | Social Media Policy for Elected Members | |
| For further information about this report please contact | Kris Walton, Digital Content & Social Media Officer | |
| Wards of the District directly affected | All wards | |
| Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006? | No | |
| Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number | N/A | |
| Background Papers | None | |

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| Contrary to the policy framework: | No |
| Contrary to the budgetary framework: | No |
| Key Decision? | No |
| Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number) | No |
| Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken | No |
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| Officer/Councillor Approval | | |
| Officer Approval | Date | Name |
| Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive | | |
| Head of Service | | |
| CMT | | |
| Section 151 Officer | | |
| Monitoring Officer | | |
| Finance | | |
| Portfolio Holder(s) | | |
| Consultation & Community Engagement | | |
| Not applicable | | |
| | | |
| Final Decision? | | Yes |
| Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below) | | |
| | | |

1. **Summary**

- 1.1 This report presents an amendment to the Internet Acceptable Usage Policy, providing specific advice for member's usage of social media as set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 In addition to this, a document to provide further guidance and tips on the usage of social media for elected members has been created, as set out in Appendix 2.

2. **Recommendation**

- 2.1 That the Standards Committee approve the amendments to the Internet Acceptable Usage Policy, attached at Appendix 1, for all elected members, to sit alongside the Member's Code of Conduct.
- 2.2 That the Standards Committee approve the 'Social Media Guide for Elected Members' document, attached at Appendix 2, that can be made available to members if they are interested in using social media in their role as a Councillor.

3. **Reasons for the Recommendation**

- 3.1 Social media is prevalent in our everyday lives. Over 2 billion people actively use social media each month, and this number is only expected to rise.
- 3.2 Increasingly, politicians, both locally and nationally, are using social media as a way to engage with residents/constituents on the issues that matter to them, as well as showing people what they are doing in their role and in the local community.
- 3.3 Whilst this is a popular way of engaging with people, it is also vulnerable to certain pitfalls. To this end, the 'Internet Acceptable Usage Policy' has been amended to include further information that is specific to members.
- 3.4 Additionally, a '*Social Media Guide for Elected Members*' has also been produced that provides further advice, guidance and tips on how members can use social media safely and effectively. This information in the guide at Appendix 2 is not a policy but rather a guide that contains further useful information for Councillors when considering social media as a tool to assist them in their role.
- 3.5 The 'Internet Acceptable Usage Policy' makes reference to both staff and members usage of social media in their personal lives, but the role of a Councillor is different to that of a staff member as Councillors are more likely to use social media in their role; this means that specific guidance for Councillors that is in line with the Members Code of Conduct is warranted.
- 3.6 With more Councillors using social media, and with the District Council elections in May 2019 possibly bringing with it more Councillors that use or are planning to use social media, it is felt that a clearly defined policy for members as well as a further information guide will assist any new Councillors, or those new to social media, with everything they need to use it effectively.
- 3.7 This also helps to reduce the risk of Councillors falling foul of the Member's Code of Conduct on social media, and demonstrates that Warwick District

Council is committed to maintaining the highest ethical standards of its elected members.

- 3.8 It is important to note that it is not a requirement for Councillors to use social media in their role; however, Warwick District Council will always support member's usage of social media.
- 3.9 This is in addition to the 'Social Media, Discrimination & the Law' training that was introduced to all elected members in January 2018 and is also being delivered to all Warwick District Council staff.
- 3.10 The *Social Media Guide for Elected Members* in its current format in Appendix 2 is the content for the guide; if approved, it will be formatted in to an interactive PDF and printable guide.

4. **Policy Framework**

4.1 **Fit for the Future (FFF)**

The Council's FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit. To that end amongst other things the FFF Strategy contains several Key projects.

The FFF Strategy has 3 strands – People, Services and Money and each has an external and internal element to it. The table below illustrates the impact of this proposal, if any, in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy.

| FFF Strands | | |
|---|--|--|
| People | Services | Money |
| External | | |
| Health, Homes, Communities | Green, Clean, Safe | Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment |
| <u>Intended outcomes:</u> Improved health for all Housing needs for all met Impressive cultural and sports activities Cohesive and active communities | <u>Intended outcomes:</u> Area has well looked after public spaces All communities have access to decent open space Improved air quality Low levels of crime and ASB | <u>Intended outcomes:</u> Dynamic and diverse local economy Vibrant town centres Improved performance/productivity of local economy Increased employment and income levels |
| Impacts of Proposal | | |
| None | None | None |
| Internal | | |
| Effective Staff | Maintain or Improve Services | Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term |
| <u>Intended outcomes:</u> All staff are properly trained All staff have the | <u>Intended outcomes:</u> Focusing on our customers' needs Continuously improve | <u>Intended outcomes:</u> Better return/use of our assets Full Cost accounting |

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| appropriate tools All staff are engaged, empowered and supported The right people are in the right job with the right skills and right behaviours | our processes Increase the digital provision of services | Continued cost management Maximise income earning opportunities Seek best value for money |
| Impacts of Proposal | | |
| Alongside the training that is offered, members will have resources at their disposal when using social media in their role. | None | None |

4.2 **Supporting Strategies**

This report does not relate to any of the supporting strategies within Fit for the Future.

4.3 **Changes to Existing Policies**

The 'Internet Acceptable Usage Policy' is amended to include reference to members use of social media.

4.4 **Impact Assessments** – No impact assessments have been undertaken on the proposals within this report.

5. **Budgetary Framework**

- 5.1 There is no budgetary impact in implementing this policy.
- 5.2 The 'Social Media, Discrimination & the Law' training is currently being delivered to all staff and is an ongoing learning and development commitment. All members are invited to partake in any of these staff sessions.
- 5.3 The only cost implications would be if members were unable to attend the staff sessions that take place during the day, and instead required a specific training session to take place in the evening.

6. **Risks**

- 6.1 The most significant risk would be damage to reputation if the policy amendments were not adopted.
- 6.2 Though the authority cannot control what anyone says or does, having a clear policy in place, with a supporting guide, helps to provide advice and guidance on how to use social media appropriately and effectively.
- 6.3 Without it, Warwick District Council cannot demonstrate that all steps have been taken to mitigate any issues that may arise.

7. Alternative Option(s) considered

- 7.1 Alternatively, there could be no specific policy for member's usage of social media in place.
- 7.2 However, this would not demonstrate the Council's commitment to maintaining and ensuring the highest standards of conduct, and would not assist the Council in minimising the damage to its reputation should an instance of social media misconduct arise.

8. Background

- 8.1 The 'Social Media, Discrimination & the Law' training was delivered to 20 councillors in January 2018. Feedback from this session was implemented in to the training that is now delivered to all Warwick District Council staff and is still available to the remaining councillors.
- 8.2 As of January 2019, 253 staff have been trained, along with 20 Councillors.
- 8.3 A Warwick District Councillor resigned from their position at the Council in May 2017 following inappropriate tweets being sent. As a result of this, further training was provided to all members.