



Meeting or Decision Maker:	Standards Committee
Date:	14 November 2019
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Updating report on use of Social Media by Members
Report of:	Tasnim Shawkat, Monitoring Officer

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. On 6 December 2018 the Committee was asked to consider a draft guidance note for Councillors on the use of social media.
- 1.2. The Committee agreed the draft note and recommended the guidance was referred to a Council meeting for consideration by all Councillors.
- 1.3. The social media guidance was discussed at the Council meeting on 26 June 2019. Some Councillors made suggested changes to the guidance. It was agreed that the guidance would be referred back to the Committee for further discussion.
- 1.4. Members of the Committee agreed at its meeting on 11 July that all Councillors be asked for their comments by the end of September.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To consider the revised guidance on use of social media following the comments received by some Councillors. (Appendix One)
- 2.2. To recommend the revised social media guidance is referred to a Council meeting for discussion and adoption.

3. Background information

- 3.1. On 4 July 2018 the Committee considered the use of social media by Members and issues that arise from such use. Following this a draft guide for Members on the use of Social Media was drafted by the legal team in consultation with the Communications team and

considered by Members at the meeting on 6 December 2018. It was agreed that the draft guidance should be considered by all Members at a Council meeting. This occurred on 20 June 2019 and all Members were invited to provide comments on the draft guidance.

3.2. Members were asked to provide their comments on the draft guidance by 30 September 2019. Members are referred to Appendix A for a summary of the responses.

3.3. Members have considered the recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life following their review of Local Government Ethical Standards.

- Recommendation 3 stated “Councillors should be presumed to be acting in an official capacity in their public conduct, including statements on publicly -accessible social media. Section 27(2) of the Localism Act 2011 should be amended to permit local authorities to presume so when deciding upon code of conduct breaches.”
- Recommendation 4 stated “Section 27(2) of the Localism Act 2011 should be amended to state that a local authority’s code of conduct applies to a member when they claim to act, or give the impression they are acting, in their capacity as a member or as a representative of the local authority.”
- This local authority is not proposing to further amend the Members Code of Conduct following the recommendations, but has instead prepared a guide for members to consider when using social media.

3.4. Some Members enquired about what they should do if they receive online abuse. In such circumstances Members can contact the Monitoring Officer for advice. The Local Government Association (LGA) published on 30 October 2019 a document called “Civility in public life and the review of the model code of conduct”. The document sets out a programme of work, part of which is, to address the intimidation of local government members. The timetable for this programme has not yet been published

3.5. It is proposed the guidance is amended to take into account the views. Members are referred to Appendix B which shows the proposed changes to the guidance, by way of track changes.

4. Financial Implications

4.1. There are no financial implications for this report.

5. Legal Implications

5.1. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6. Background Papers

<https://committees.westminster.gov.uk/documents/s30107/5a%20-%20Use%20of%20Social%20Media%20covering%20report.pdf> Report on use of social media 6 December 2018

**If you have any queries about this report please contact: Hazel Best;
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