

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO COUNCIL

16 OCTOBER 2013

### REPORT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

#### PROTOCOL FOR THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY ELECTED MEMBERS

##### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To approve the Protocol for the use of Social Media by Elected Members as attached as Appendix 1.

##### 2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 Elected Members have a wide range of roles and responsibilities that they are expected to undertake. The protocol for the use of social media by Elected Members provides an opportunity for each ward member to engage with their community and to progress the improvement objectives of the Authority.

##### 3. Background

- 3.1 Social media is the term given to online media/websites that are based on user-generated content and participation. Social media can fall under the following categories: blogs, forums, podcasts, wikis, networks and other online communities.
- 3.2 Social Media is playing a significant role in the passage of information in the UK. The following table shows an approximate comparison between traditional and social media users in the UK

Media	Users UK (millions)	UK Population (millions)	Percentage
Facebook	33	65 approx	51%
TV/Radio Licence holders	25		38%
Newspapers	11		17%
Twitter	10		15%

- 3.2 In 2011 Beaufort Research undertook a social media survey in Wales which identified that:

- 7 in 10 Welsh adults personally use the internet
- 7 in 10 internet users in Wales used social media. This equates to almost half of all adults in Wales using social media in some shape or form.
- 57% of Welsh internet users have used Facebook – 4 in 10 of all Welsh adults. This increases to 89% of 16-24 year old internet users that used Facebook
- Twitter had been used by 12% of internet users in Wales

- 3.3 As part of our communications and engagement strategy, Bridgend County

Borough Council (BCBC) is committed to engaging with citizens and other interested parties in an effective and transparent way. Social media will allow Elected Members to develop two-way, real-time communications with their various constituents. If managed appropriately the use of social media as a communications tool for Councillors can be very helpful.

#### **4. Current situation / proposal**

- 4.1 Elected Member access to social media sites from their BCBC ICT accounts and equipment is currently restricted. No restrictions exist for Elected Members accessing social media sites from their own personal equipment and accounts.
- 4.2 To enable Elected Members to access social media accounts when representing themselves in their capacity as councillors and when using their BCBC accounts and equipment, a protocol is needed to provide a framework for its safe and effective use. The protocol is also intended to provide useful guidance for Elected Members when accessing social media for personal use.
- 4.3 It is proposed that the Elected Members wishing to have access to social media from their official ICT accounts will be required to:
1. Sign and adhere to the Council's ICT Code of Conduct
  2. Attend suitable Social Media training which identifies the implications and hazards of using social media
  3. Request access permissions from the ICT department for the specific social media sites they wish to use. Access will be denied to sites that are considered a security risk to the BCBC Network.
  4. All Elected Members who have been granted use the Council's internet access are required to accept this protocol.
- 4.4 It has been planned for all Elected Members to "re-sign" their BCBC ICT Code of Conduct using Net Consent. Elected Members who subsequently join the Authority will be requested to sign the ICT code of Conduct during their induction process.
- 4.5 Social Media training has been provided by the WLGA with a number of Elected Members attending an event held in Bridgend. Attendance at this event met the training requirement for access to social media sites in accordance with the protocol. The WLGA are planning to repeat this training event on a regional basis and the Head of Democratic Services has offered the use of the Council Chamber to host one of these regional training sessions.
- 4.6 The WLGA are also investigating the provision of additional training which will focus on practical skills for setting up and managing social media accounts. The Head of Democratic Services will monitor the progress being made by the WLGA and advise Elected Members accordingly.
- 4.7 Once the criteria stated in paragraphs 4.4 – 4.6 have been met Elected Members

will be able to log an ICT Service Desk call to request access to the social media sites of their choice. Checks will be made and access will be provided in due course.

- 4.8 The Democratic Services Committee considered this Protocol for the use of Social Media by Elected Members on 12 September 2013. The Committee welcomed this protocol and indicated that it was a practical and common sense approach to provide access to social media for councillors.
- 4.9 The Committee considered that the requirement for Elected Members to respond to interactions in other languages received on their personal social media accounts required clarification. Subsequent discussions with the Communication and Equalities Officers made the following amendment to the protocol:
- You should communicate through social media in the language of your choice. However, if a social media account you are operating in an official capacity receives a query in a language in which you are not fluent, you may request that the individual redirects this to your @bridgend.gov.uk email address. This will enable the query to be dealt with by the Authority in the individual's language using an approved translator.
- 4.10 The Democratic Services Committee members were consulted on this amendment and had no further comments regarding this change.

## **5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules**

- 5.1 There is no effect on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 There are no equalities implications in respect of this report.

## **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1 All activities described in this report will be met from existing budget provision

## **8. Recommendation**

- 8.1.1 The Democratic Services Committee recommends that Council adopt the draft Protocol for the use of Social Media by Elected Members attached as Appendix 1.

**P A Jolley**  
**Assistant Chief Executive – Legal & Regulatory Services**  
**01 October 2013**

**Contact Officer:** Gary Jones  
Head of Democratic Services

**Telephone:** (01656) 643385

**E-mail:** [Gary.Jones@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:Gary.Jones@bridgend.gov.uk)

**Postal Address** Democratic Services,  
Civic Offices  
Angel Street  
Bridgend.  
CF31 4WB

**Background documents** – None