

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**REPORT TO THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**12 SEPTEMBER 2013**

**REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE – LEGAL & REGULATORY SERVICES**

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

**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 To consider the draft Protocol for the use of Social Media by Elected Members attached as Appendix 1, propose appropriate amendments (as necessary) and endorse its submission to Council for approval on 16 October 2013.

**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 – that's 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 For Elected Members to access social media accounts when representing themselves in their official 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 site 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 in September 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.

## **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 It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee:

8.1.1 Consider the draft Protocol for the use of Social Media by Elected Members attached as Appendix 1;

8.1.2 Consider whether it wishes to propose any appropriate amendments to the protocol and

8.1.3 Endorse the submission of the agreed draft Protocol for the use of Social Media by Elected Members to Council for approval at its meeting on 16 October 2013.

**P A Jolley**

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**06 September 2013**

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**Background documents** – None