

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

14 MARCH 2019

### REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

#### WLGA SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLORS

#### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a copy of guidance produced by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) regarding social media guidance for Councillors.

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

- 2.1 The Democratic Services Committee functions directly support the Corporate Priorities.
- **Supporting a successful economy** - taking steps to make the county a good place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all the people in the county.
  - **Helping people to be more self-reliant** – taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
  - **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human, and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

#### 3. Background

- 3.1 The Members' Code of Conduct does not specifically include any obligations in relation to social media. However, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has seen an increase in the number of complaints made regarding comments that have been placed by Elected Members throughout Wales on social media platforms.
- 3.2 Personal use of social media will fall outside the ambit of the Code, however if a Member mentions public issues or Council activity on social media then those comments are likely to be perceived as having been made in an official capacity.

#### 4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1 The WLGA recognises that social media is playing an increasingly important role in local politics and has prepared a guide for Elected Members in relation to its use (attached as **Appendix 1**). The purpose of the guidance is to enable Members to benefit from the use of social media whilst minimising the associated risks such as reputational damage, breaching the code of conduct.

4.2 Guidance has also been published providing advice to Members on how to manage or report online abuse or harassment (**Appendix 2**).

4.3 The social media guidance has been circulated to all Elected Members and was considered by the authority's Standards Committee at its meeting on 7 March 2019.

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

5.1 None.

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

## **7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications**

7.1 There will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

## **8. Financial Implications**

8.1 None.

## **9. Recommendation**

9.1 It is recommended that Members note the WLGA guidance.

**Contact Officer:** **Andrew Rees**  
Democratic Services Manager  
7 March 2019

**Telephone:** 01656 643147

**E-mail:** [Andrew.rees@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.rees@bridgend.gov.uk)

**Postal Address** Civic Centre, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB

## **Background documents**

None