Arun District Council
Civic Centre
Maltravers Road
Littlehampton
West Sussex
BN17 5LF

Tel: (01903 737500)
Fax: (01903) 730442
DX: 57406 Littlehampton
Minicom: 01903 732765

e-mail: committees@arun.gov.uk

Committee Manager Jane Fulton

10 September 2020

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

A meeting of the **Standards Committee** will be held on **Thursday 24 September 2020 at 6.00 p.m.** and you are requested to attend.

*PLEASE NOTE: This meeting will be a 'virtual meeting' and any member of the press and public may listen-in and view the proceedings via a weblink which will be publicised on the Council website at least 24 hours before the meeting.*

*Different meeting arrangements are in place for the period running from 4 April 2020 to 7 May 2021 from the provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and the meeting regulations 2020, to allow formal 'virtual meetings'.*

*This Council's revised Rules of Procedures for 'virtual meetings' can be viewed here* click here

Members:     Councillors Edwards (Chairman), Bennett (Vice-Chair), Mrs Baker, B Blanchard-Cooper, Bower, Coster, English, Kelly and Tilbrook

# A G E N D A

1.     APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.     DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and Officers are invited to make any declarations of pecuniary, personal and/or prejudicial interests that they may have in relation to items on this agenda, and are reminded that they should re-declare their interest before consideration of the item or as soon as the interest becomes apparent.

Members and Officers should make their declaration by stating:
   a)     the item that they the interest in
   b)     whether it is a pecuniary, personal and/or prejudicial interest
   c)     the nature of the interest

3. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2020 (attached).

4. ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA WHICH THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION MODEL MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT (Pages 5 - 10)

The Local Government Association has produced a New Model Member Code of Conduct.

It is open to the Council to adopt this Code of Conduct in whole, or with amendments. Alternatively, the Council can amend its existing Member Code of Conduct.

6. NEW SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLORS (Pages 11 - 40)

This report seeks the views of the Standards Committee relating to a new Social Media Guidance document for Councillors. It is open to Standards Committee to recommend that Cabinet endorse the Guidance in whole, or with amendments.

7. REGISTER OF ASSESSMENTS OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST COUNCILLORS (Pages 41 - 44)

This report updates the Committee on the complaints against Councillors received so far in 2020. The Committee is responsible for maintaining high standards of conduct by Members of the District and Town & Parish Councils, for monitoring operation of the Code of Conduct, and for considering the outcome of investigations in the event of breaches of the Code.

8. EXEMPT INFORMATION

The Committee is asked to consider passing the following resolution:-

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and accredited representatives of newspapers be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds it may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.

9. REGISTER OF ASSESSMENTS OF COMPLAINTS (Pages 45 - 50) AGAINST COUNCILLORS [EXEMPT - PARAGRAPH 1 - INFORMATION RELATING TO INDIVIDUALS]

To consider the attached report.

Note : *Indicates report is attached for all Members of the Council only and the press (excluding exempt items).  Copies of reports can be obtained on request from the Committee Manager).

Note :  Members are reminded that if they have any detailed questions would they please inform the Chairman and/or relevant Director in advance of the meeting.

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STANDARDS COMMITTEE

20 February 2020 at 6.08 pm

Present:        Councillors English (Chairman), Bennett (Vice-Chairman), Bower, Coster, Mrs Daniells, Edwards, Kelly, Tilbrook and Mrs Worne

Independent Persons Mr B Green and Mr J Thompson were also in attendance at the meeting.

461.   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Bennett, Bower, Coster and Mrs Worne all declared their Personal Interests in Agenda Item 9 [Register of Assessment of Complaints against Councillors] as some of the complaints contained within report involved them.  They confirmed that they would leave the meeting if those complaints became the subject of debate.

462.   MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 25 July 2019 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

463.   UPDATE ON THE REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT AND LOCAL ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

In discussing the feedback from the consultation exercise, the Committee welcomed the overall support to the proposed areas of change to both the Members' Code of Conduct and the Local Assessment Procedure that had been received from those Town and Parish Councils and District Councillor who had responded.   The Committee did consider two areas where there had not been consensus and:

1. maintained its previous view on Best Practice Recommendation 3 (the timing of reviews of the Code of Conduct) that reviews should be undertaken every two years timed to be undertaken at the end of years 1 and 3 of each administration; and
2. supported the views of Town and Parish Councils on Best Practice Recommendation 11 (who should make complaints about the conduct of a parish councillor towards a clerk) that this should not be restricted to the Chairman of the Parish Council.

The Committee also agreed that the proposed areas for change to the Members' Code of Conduct should include an obligation that a Councillor must not conduct themselves in a manner which could be reasonably regarded as bringing their office as a Councillor, or the Council itself into disrepute.  A request was also made for the review to consider the latest Probity in Planning guidance issued by the Local Government Association in December 2019.

The Committee then reviewed whether the Principles of the Code of Conduct, as set out in Section 1, Paragraph 2.1 of the Code should be updated with the CSPLs redefined definitions. The Committee was not comfortable with all of the redefined Principles and asked the Monitoring Officer to review whether there could be a mix and match between the current and redefined wording, and whether the Council could introduce its own wording. It was agreed that a report back would be made on this as part of the ongoing review.

The Committee then

RESOLVED – That

(1)    the Group Head of Council Advice & Monitoring Officer brings back a revised draft of the Members' Code of Conduct and Local Assessment Procedure to a future meeting taking account of all the proposed areas for change agreed by the Council on 18 September 2019 and highlighted at this meeting; and

(2)    the final amended versions then be presented to the Full Council for approval with an estimated completion date of November 2020.

464.    APPOINTMENT OF TWO ADDITIONAL INDEPENDENT PERSONS TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Committee received a report from the Group Head of Council Advice and Monitoring Officer which sought the agreement of the Committee to recommend the appointment of two further Independent Persons to the Standards Committee. It was outlined that in line with Paragraph 4.5(7) of Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) of the Council's Constitution, any recommendations for appointment needed to be made by Full Council.

Councillor Bennett was invited to present the detail of this item as he had chaired the interview panel that had conducted interviews on 16 January 2020.

Councillor Bennett explained that the interview panel had consisted of himself, Councillor Mrs Daniells, and the Group Head of Council Advice & Monitoring Officer. The selection process had considered the candidate's application form and their response to questions posed at interview against the selection criteria and job description for the role. All applicants had also been assessed against the requirements of Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 which confirmed what would disqualify a candidate from being appointed to this role.

Councillor Bennett outlined that out of the four candidates interviewed, the Panel had unanimously agreed that two be recommended to the Committee for appointment, being John Cooke and Sandra Prail based upon their excellent skills and experience that they could bring to the role. As both candidates had been invited to attend the meeting they were introduced to the Committee and they provided a brief overview of their professional backgrounds.

The Group Head of Council Advice & Monitoring Officer reminded the Committee that it had originally agreed to recruit one additional Independent Persons to extend the number of Independent Persons to three to ensure that there was always adequate independent opinion available to both the Committee and the Monitoring Officer. Appointing an additional Independent Person would always ensure that there was adequate coverage and would allow the opportunity to rotate independent persons around complaint issues to extend experience and cover. It was outlined that the legislation did not set a maximum of Independent Persons to be appointed.

Following brief debate and having agreed to the two suggested appointments, the Committee

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL – That

(1) John Cooke is appointed as an Independent Person to the Standards Committee for an initial term of office of one year from the date of the Full Council decision;

(2) Sandra Prail is appointed as an Independent Person to the Standards Committee for an initial term of office of one year from the date of the Full Council decision;

(3) Subject to the appointments being confirmed at (1) and (2) above, the Group Head of Council Advice & Monitoring Officer be authorised to confirm the appointment terms to John Cooke and Sandra Prail; and

(4) The Standards Committee review any extension to these terms of office in January 2021 and then report back to Full Council.

465. REGISTER OF ASSESSMENTS OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST COUNCILLORS

*(Prior to the commencement of the discussion on this item, Councillors Bennett, Bower, Coster and Mrs Worne re-declared their interests made at the start of the meeting).*

The Committee received a report from the Group Head of Council Advice & Monitoring Officer which provided Members with an update on the complaints made against Councillors over the past two years.

The Committee was advised that this report was being provided in a slightly different format in that it was being presented in open business with the latest list of complaints being provided to Members of the Committee only as an Exempt Appendix, on the basis that it included information relating to individuals. It was made clear therefore that should the Committee wish to discuss any information contained within the Appendix, then it would be necessary for the meeting to move into Exempt business.

Standards - 20.02.20

It was highlighted that since the Committee's last meeting, ten complaints had been received under the Code of Conduct. Of the seven complaints completed, none had required a Stage 2 assessment. The Group Head of Council Advice & Monitoring Officer outlined that since the last meeting, practices had been reviewed on whether a modified public register of complaints should be introduced for publishing via the Committee onto the Council's website. This review had highlighted how few Councils published information on the outcome of complaints received, however, two examples found from the review were circulated to the meeting for discussion. One was from Huntingdonshire District Council and the other was from Durham County Council. The views of the Committee were sought in terms of whether it felt that this Council should publish an annual report of its Code of Conduct complaints.

The Committee agreed that this would be a transparent way of updating the public on complaint cases received and would illustrate how thoroughly complaints were investigated. It did not express any specific view in terms of when this report would be presented, either at the end of each Municipal Year or as part of the first cycle of meetings in the new Council year. Having examined the two examples circulated, the Committee highlighted the Huntingdonshire model as its preference.

The Committee

RESOLVED – That

(1)     The Register of Complaints against Councillors be noted; and

(2)     A change to the publication on the outcome of complaints be made by producing a public register of complaints to be published annually, using the Huntingdonshire model circulated to the meeting.

466.    EXEMPT INFORMATION

The Committee

RESOLVED

That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and accredited representatives of newspapers be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.

467.    REGISTER OF ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST COUNCILLORS

Having noted the Register of Complaints as part of the previous item, the Committee discussed some of the complaints received.

(The meeting concluded at 7.19 pm)

# ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## REPORT TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
## ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2020

**PART A :  REPORT**

**SUBJECT:**  Local Government Association Model Member Code of Conduct

**REPORT AUTHOR:**    Nigel Lynn, Chief Executive
**DATE:** August 2020
**EXTN:**  01903 737600

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Local Government Association has produced a New Model Member Code of Conduct.

It is open to the Council to adopt this Code of Conduct in whole, or with amendments. Alternatively, the Council can amend its existing Member Code of Conduct.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Committee is asked to recommend to Full Council that:

1) The Local Government Association New Model Member Code of Conduct be adopted; and

2) The Acting Monitoring Officer make consequential changes to the Constitution

**1.   BACKGROUND:**

1.1     All Councils are required to have a local Member Code of Conduct.

1.2    On 20 February 2020, Standards Committee resolved that the Group Head of Council Advice & Monitoring Officer produce a revised draft of the Members Code of Conduct.  Due to COVID-19, other priorities took precedence.  Subsequently, the Local Government Association (LGA) produced a new Model Member Code of Conduct (New Code) which was put out for consultation between 8 June 2020 – 17 August 2020.  In discussion between the Interim Monitoring Officer and Chairman of Standards Committee, it was agreed that New Code be brought before Standards Committee.

1.3 The LGA are to consider consultation responses and will then produce a final draft of the New Code, which will be reviewed by the LGA's Executive Advisory Board, before being presented to the next LGA General Assembly, in the Autumn of 2020.

1.4 Provided the New Code is published prior to the Standards Committee meeting on 24 September 2020, a link to the New Code will be circulated to members of the Committee. However, if the New Code is not available, then this item will be deferred to a subsequent meeting.

1.5 The LGA have produced the New Code, as recommended by the Committee on Standards in Public Life's report into Local Government Ethical Standards. The LGA consulted stakeholders and examined good practice in local government and other professions. The LGA intends to create additional guidance, working examples and explanatory text in due course.

1.6 The LGA have sought to address issues arising through more communication taking place remotely and online between Members and residents, particularly through social media. It has acknowledged there may be more difficult and heated discussions as some seek to express the fear, frustration and heightened emotions they are experiencing at this time. However, abuse, threatening and intimidatory communications continue to be unacceptable, and the New Code seeks to address this.

1.7 The New Code has been designed to protect Members' democratic role, encourage good conduct and safeguard the public's trust in local government.

1.8 The New Code applies when a Member acts, or claims or gives the impression that they are acting, as a Member. This applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including social media.

1.9 The New Code has been developed in line with the seven principles of public life:

1. selflessness;
2. integrity;
3. objectivity;
4. accountability;
5. openness;
6. honesty;
7. leadership.

1.10 The New Code (consultation version) sets out the specific obligations of general conduct that should be followed:

a) Treating other councillors and members of the public with civility.
b) Treating council employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the councils with civility and respecting the role that they play.
c) Not bullying or harassing any person.
d) Not compromising, or attempting to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, the council.
e) Not disclosing information given to me in confidence or disclosing information acquired by me which I believe is of a confidential nature, unless I have

received the consent of a person authorised to give it or I am required by law to do so.

    f) Not preventing anyone getting information that they are entitled to by law.

    g) Not bringing my role or council into disrepute.

    h) Not using, or attempting to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else.

    i) Not misusing council resources.

    j) Registering and declaring my interests.

    k) Not accepting significant gifts or hospitality from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the council or from persons who may apply to the council for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.

    l) Registering with the monitoring officer any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25 within 28 days of its receipt.

1.11 If the New Code is adopted, consequential changes will be required to the Constitution, including:

- Part 8 Section 1 paragraph 1.1, last sentence that states the dates when the Code of Conduct was adopted, to be updated;

- Part 8 Section 2 paragraph 2 General Conduct, this will need amending to reflect the general conduct obligations as set out in the New Code.

## 2. PROPOSALS

The Standards Committee recommends to Full Council that:

    The Local Government Association New Model Member Code of Conduct be adopted; and

    The Monitoring Officer make consequential changes to the Constitution

## 3. OPTIONS:

1) Recommend to Full Council the adoption of the Local Government Association New Model Member Code of Conduct; or

2) Recommend to Full Council the adoption of the Local Government Association New Model Code of Conduct with amendments; or

3) Reject the Local Government Association New Model Code of Conduct; and resolve that the Acting Monitoring Officer produces a revised draft of the Members' Code of Conduct for consideration at a future Standards Committee

## 4. CONSULTATION:

Legal

Section 27(1) of the Localism Act 2011 (the Act) provides the authority must promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members of the authority.

Section 27(2) of the Act provides the authority must adopt a code of conduct that is expected of Members when acting that capacity.

Section 28 of the Act provides the authority must adopt a Code of Conduct consistent with the seven principles of public life.

Section 28(5) of the Act provides that an authority may revise its existing code of conduct or adopt a code of conduct to replace its existing code.

| Has consultation been undertaken with: | **YES** | **NO** |
|---|---|---|
| Relevant Town/Parish Council | | |
| Relevant District Ward Councillors | | |
| Other groups/persons (please specify) | | |
| **5.  ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)** | **YES** | **NO** |
| Financial | | |
| Legal | Y | |
| Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment | | |
| Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act | | |
| Sustainability | | |
| Asset Management/Property/Land | | |
| Technology | | |
| Other (please explain) | | |

**6.  IMPLICATIONS:**

Adopting the New Code will provide clear expectations on Members as to their conduct and will manage public expectations.

**7.  REASON FOR THE DECISION:**

A Member Code of Conduct is required by Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011.

The Code of Conduct requires updating to reflect increased means of communication between Members and the public, including through social media.

**8.  BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

Local Government Association Model Member Code of Conduct 8 June 2020 (consultation version) https://www.local.gov.uk/local-government-association-model-member-code-conduct-consultation

Committee on Standards in Public Life publication: Local Government Ethical Standards (January 2019)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/777315/6.4896_CO_CSPL_Command_Paper_on_Local_Government_Standards_v4_WEB.PDF

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# ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## REPORT TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
## ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2020

### PART A :  REPORT

| SUBJECT: New Social Media Guidance for Councillors |
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| REPORT AUTHOR: | Nigel Lynn – Chief Executive |
|---|---|
| DATE: | August 2020 |
| EXTN: | 01903 737830 |

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

This report seeks the views of the Standards Committee relating to a new Social Media Guidance document for Councillors.  It is open to Standards Committee to recommend that Cabinet endorse the Guidance in whole, or with amendments.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Committee is asked to recommend to Cabinet that:

1) The new Social Media Guidance for Councillors be endorsed, replacing the previous version endorsed by Cabinet on 31 May 2016; and
2) To authorise the Acting Monitoring Officer to make any consequential changes arising from the adoption of a new Members Code of Conduct.

**1.  BACKGROUND:**

1.1. As part of the review of the Members Code of Conduct, the former Chairman of Standards Committee, Councillor English, requested a review of the Social Media Guidance for Councillors. That guidance was endorsed by Cabinet on 31 May 2016, decision reference: C/005/310516.

1.2. Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd (HAA) were commissioned to review that guidance and prepare a new draft (see Appendix 1).  The new guidance has been drafted taking into consideration that social media has transformed the way that people communicate. People now publish and share their views and engage in instant conversations with others about those views. That is why it is important Councillors know how to use social media effectively as a communications tool.

1.3. The purpose of the guidance is to support Councillors, in utilising social media effectively and avoiding potential pitfalls, that can result in Member Code of Conduct complaints.

1.4. Paragraph 13 sets out the relevant paragraphs of the existing Members Code of Conduct that may apply to social media posts.  The Local Government Association

have recently consulted on a new Members Code of Conduct.  If Arun District Council subsequently adopts the new Code, then this paragraph of the guidance will require updating, to reflect the applicable paragraphs under the new Code.

## 2. PROPOSAL(S):

The new Social Media Guidance for Councillors be endorsed, replacing the previous version endorsed by Cabinet on 31 May 2016.

The Acting Monitoring Officer be authorised to make any consequential changes arising from the adoption of a new Members Code of Conduct.

## 3. OPTIONS:

(i) To endorse the new Social Media Guidance for Councillors or

(ii) Not to endorse the new Social Media Guidance for Councillors

## 4. CONSULTATION:

| Has consultation been undertaken with: | YES | NO |
|---|---|---|
| Relevant Town/Parish Council | | X |
| Relevant District Ward Councillors | | X |
| Other groups/persons (please specify) | | |

| 5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below) | YES | NO |
|---|---|---|
| Financial | | X |
| Legal | X | |
| Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment | | X |
| Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act | | X |
| Sustainability | | X |
| Asset Management/Property/Land | | X |
| Technology | | X |
| Other (please explain) | | X |

## 6. IMPLICATIONS:

Legal

Section 27(1) of the Localism Act 2011 (the Act) provides the authority must promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members of the authority.

Section 27(2) of the Act provides the authority must adopt a Code of Conduct that is expected of Members when acting in that capacity.

This guidance will support Members in maintaining high standards of conduct and create awareness of how the Code of Conduct may apply to social media communications.

## 7.  REASON FOR THE DECISION:

To provide updated guidance for Councillors as to how to approach social media communications, and how the Code of Conduct may apply to those communications.

## 8.  BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Social Media Guidance for Councillors



SM Policy 2016
Final - Councillors.p

Lord McAlpine-v-Sally Bercow [2013] EWHC 1342 (QB)

https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/JCO/Documents/Judgments/mcalpine-bercow-judgment-24052013.pdf

Filming and Photography Policy

https://arungovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/hrandpayroll/SiteAssets/Filming%20and%20Photographic%20Policy.pdf#search=filming%20and%20photography%20policy

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**Social media guidance**

**Contents**

**1.    About this document**

This guidance document is for **Councillors** of Arun District Council and has been created to provide information about the Council's social media policy requirements and 'best practice' advice in the use of social media accounts.
This document should be read alongside the authority's **Information Security Policy** and **Internet and Email Acceptable Usage Agreement.** There is a separate social media policy for staff.

Social Media is a fast evolving environment and as such, this guidance is a **live** document which will be updated as significant developments arise. It will be available on the Councillor's intranet.


**2.    What is social media?**

Social media may be defined as "a collective term used to describe easy ways to create and publish on the internet." Below we look at some of the different social media platforms and how they might be used effectively. But in summary social media has transformed the way that organisations do business and organisations and individuals interact.

It has allowed the creation and wide sharing of information, ideas and interests. It has provided a voice for those who weren't well heard before and has changed the way that councils and Councillors interact with local people.

This guidance looks at how social media can be used effectively as a communications tool by Councillors as well as some of the pitfalls and dangers they need to avoid.

The important thing to remember about social media is that it's social - it's about communication and interaction. It has transformed the way that people communicate. People are less reliant on traditional print and broadcast media for their news but instead anyone can now publish and share their views and engage in instant conversations with others about those views. That is why it is important Councillors know how to use social media effectively.


**3.    Social media accounts**

There are four types of social media account:

- Corporate Accounts – managed by the communications team
- Departmental Accounts – professional accounts managed by an officer on behalf of the Council
- Personal Accounts – managed by Councillors for their personal use
- Councillor@arun.dc accounts – managed by Councillors for their ADC Councillor use only

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As Councillors do not have responsibilities for managing Corporate or Departmental accounts, this document applies solely to the use of 'Personal' social media accounts. It does, however, briefly explain the purpose of these corporate accounts as wider context.

It is the responsibility of individual Councillors to manage their social media accounts.

To ensure the appropriate, safe and effective use of social media, Councillors are advised to follow these guidelines.


## 4. Who to contact for help

If you are unclear about any matter relating to social media for Arun District Council use, please contact our Communications Team for further advice or guidance.

**Contact: public.relations@arun.gov.uk**

Arun District Council IT department do not support personal social media accounts, therefore, please do not contact them as they are unable to provide advice or guidance.


## 5. Examples of social media

There are a wide range of social media platforms available, some of the most popular being:

- Twitter
- Facebook
- WhatsApp
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Nextdoor

It is important to consider which platforms are most likely to reach the target audience you would like to engage with and the means by which you would like to communicate with them (e.g. two-way conversation, passing on information, visuals etc). Twitter and Facebook are the most widely used social media platforms and therefore the most relevant to Councillors. This section of the guidance will focus on Twitter and Facebook for Councillors, and will touch on other platforms too:

**Twitter** is ideal for 'talking' to your audience directly to give them timely information, and to express your opinions or comments on topical issues. While your tweets and replies remain available to view unless you delete them they are likely to only appear on your follower's Twitter feeds for a short time so it's more appropriate to use

Twitter to communicate things that are happening 'now' or express views on current issues.

Twitter is essentially giving out soundbites, providing links to articles which may be of interest or commenting on or replying to the views of others. People can choose to follow you, usually because you provide information or make comments on things that are relevant to them rather than because they necessarily know you personally, and unless you make your account private or you block individual accounts essentially you have no control over who follows you or can view your tweets and replies. A tweet is nearly always open to the world to see.

Thus it is probably the most effective tool for quick, direct communication – it's usually short (though the use of longer Twitter 'threads' is increasingly common) so easily absorbed and open to anyone – but it is also the most open to misinterpretation and misuse as it is difficult to do nuance in a short tweet and proper and considered debate can be difficult. Also, its open nature and tendency for some to use anonymous accounts can leave you susceptible to abuse and 'trolling'.

You can also click to 'like' someone else's tweet, re-tweet it (with or without adding your own comment) or reply to it. If doing so, you should be aware that others can view the tweets that you have 'liked' and indeed these tweets may appear in the Twitter feeds of your followers with a note at the top saying that you've 'liked' the tweet even if your followers don't follow the account that tweeted the original tweet. Therefore, you should be mindful about what you 'like' and recognise that most will assume that by 'liking' a tweet that you're endorsing its content. Similarly most will assume that by retweeting something you agree with it or endorse it, regardless of what you state in your profile. Therefore, you should consider adding a comment to provide clarity.

Conversations on the same theme on Twitter are called threads. You can search for tweets on a subject that you are interested in by typing your subject into the search box. Tweets on the same theme are drawn together using hashtags. People use the hashtag symbol (#) before a relevant keyword or phrase in their tweet to categorise those tweets and help them show more easily in a Twitter search. Clicking on a hash tagged word in any message shows you other Tweets that include that hashtag.

**Facebook** is ideal for posting information and related media such as pictures and videos which can be commented on and shared by 'friends' or 'followers'.

If Twitter is about broadcasting short messages, Facebook can be used to open up lengthier discussions, share wider information and form and participate in online communities. Users can post onto their own timeline, comment on or share other users' posts, set up, join and post in 'Groups', create, follow or like 'Pages' and create and respond to 'Events'. It allows posts as long, short, detailed or simple as you like and people can easily comment and get a discussion going. It can be used for political messages or just communicating with friends. Increasingly public figures

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such as Councillors are using 'Pages' on Facebook to communicate publicly and will have a separate personal account for communicating with family and friends. It is worth considering how you wish to use Facebook and ensure that you have the most appropriate type of account or accounts to suit your needs. You should also consider the privacy settings available and ensure that you have them set to the appropriate levels for your account(s). For standard, personal Facebook accounts you have to request to become 'friends' with others and can accept or decline 'friend' requests. Once a friendship is formed on Facebook your posts will appear in each other's feeds/on each other's timelines unless you amend your settings. If you are a member of a 'Group' and post or comment within it other members of the 'Group' will be able to see what you've said, even if you're not 'friends' with them. For example, many towns, villages, neighbourhoods and local communities have their own Facebook 'Groups' where local issues, concerns and events are posted and discussed. Often Councillors will be members of these 'Groups' which enables you to keep abreast of issues and concerns, share information and publicise events with members of your local community beyond your personal 'friends'.

As Facebook 'Groups' and 'Pages' are generally open forums you should be prepared to receive challenge and criticism. Not everyone will agree with your ideas or views, though you can set rules, moderate and edit other people's posts if their language or content is offensive or inappropriate.

**WhatsApp** is primarily a closed messaging service. As well as allowing the exchange of messages and media between individual users, 'Groups' can be created and 'chats' can take place between members of the 'Group'. Many political groups use it for the exchange of private messages between members. While messages exchanged on WhatsApp are not broadcast publicly it is worth remembering that others have the ability to take screenshots of messages that you send and share with others.

**YouTube** is an online video-sharing platform. YouTube allows users to upload, view, rate, share and comment on videos, and subscribe to other users' 'channels'. Videos are easy to record via a smartphone and YouTube is increasingly being used by councils to post information.

**LinkedIn** is a way to connect with like-minded individuals or people with similar career paths. It allows you in effect to enter your CV, providing information about your career history and skills and you can accept or decline people who want to see your profile. Those people with whom you are "linked" can endorse you for particular skills. It is a handy site for finding expertise and keeping up-to-date with business developments in your ward or area.

**Instagram** is a photo and video sharing service which allows users to upload media and organise it with 'tags' and location information. Users can view photos and videos posted by accounts that they 'follow', or they can 'follow' particular 'tags' or search for images that have been 'tagged' with a particular word, phrase or location. Don't forget to seek permission before taking photos to upload to, or copying images from Instagram.

**Snapchat** is a messaging app for photo, video, drawing and text. One of the app's principal features is that pictures and messages are usually only available for a short time before they become inaccessible to their recipients. Other features include the ability for users to post 'Stories' of 24 hours of chronological content and allows them to keep their photos in a password-protected space.

**Nextdoor** is a social networking service for neighbourhoods. It is typically used to report local news and events and members often ask each other for local service-provider recommendations.

## 6. Setting up a social media account

Managing a social media account can be very time consuming as it needs to be regularly updated if it is to be an effective communications tool. Before setting up an account, you should ask yourself the following questions:

**Why** do you think you need a social media account?

**How** will you manage the account? How much time will you be able to dedicate to it?

**What** information will you be communicating through the account?

Is it purely for my role as a Councillor, purely for private matters or will it be for both purposes?

**IT IS BETTER NOT TO HAVE A SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT THAN TO HAVE ONE THAT CANNOT BE PROPERLY MANAGED.**

**Use of email addresses in setting up a personal social media account**

Councillors must **not** use their @arun.gov.uk email address to set up personal social media accounts, for security reasons. Only personal email addresses can be used for this purpose and if a Council email address has been used, the account may be closed requiring that a new one be set up.

It is important to note that the closing of a social media account due to the misuse of an email address in this way may result in significant loss to that account e.g. loss of followers. Arun District Council cannot take responsibility for any such loss.

**Choosing your username**

When choosing your username for a social media account, as this name will appear in the public domain, it is important that is not misleading to your audience. A personal social media account should not give followers the impression that the account represents an organisation.

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In particular, if you are setting up an account to support your role as a Councillor, you should choose an account name that clearly distinguishes it from that of Arun District Council's social media accounts.

To this end, it is strongly suggested that you choose words that clearly show that the account is a personal one (e.g. for a Twitter account, you might choose @your name or @Councillorname but not @aruncouncil or @arunplanning).

Note that a maximum of 15 characters are allowed for Twitter usernames.

**Using a disclaimer**

When setting up a social media account that you intend to use in relation to your role as Councillor, it is strongly advised that you must include the below disclaimer on the account so it is clearly accessible to your followers:

*'The views posted represent my own and are not attributed to any other person or organisation.'*

**Use of email addresses in setting up a Councillor@arundc social media account**

Councillors must not use an Arun email address to set up personal social media accounts. For security reasons, Councillor email addresses can only be used for Council business, with the social media account clearly identifying that they are an elected Councillor for Arun District Council.

The Council will control the password so that the site can be removed should the Councillor leave the Council or the site needs to be closed for another reason.

**Choosing your user name**

When you are setting up an account to support your role as a Councillor, you can only choose an account name that clearly identifies you as a part of Arun District Council's social media accounts e.g. CllrMrxy@arun.gov.uk

A standard Council template will be used for these Councillor social media sites so that the link between the Councillor and the Council itself is clearly identified.

**7. The Benefits of using social media**

Social media is a communication tool which allows you to connect with a much wider range of people more regularly than traditional communications methods. It is free for all to use, messages are received instantly to allow real-time feedback and are accessible to anyone who is online. Used effectively that is why it can be a very powerful tool for Councillors.

**8. Why does the Council use it for corporate communication?**

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As mentioned above the Council has a number of corporate social media accounts. It is about being a modern communicator. Previously if the public wanted information about service they would phone up the Council or go to the Council website and receive that information passively without being able to enter into discussions with third parties about the information or know how accurate or up-to-date any information might be.

Now people want to be told things instantly and rather than looking for answers themselves may simply ask questions on social media and see who responds. If the Council is not communicating it does not control the information that people receive and people may get contradictory answers or no reply at all but many people now feel it's easier to ask a question on Twitter or Facebook than click through various pages on a website to find the information they need. So if the Council is not communicating with its residents other people will be but it may not be the accurate message the Council needs to get out and instead someone with less information or a different agenda may be communicating with residents instead.

Not engaging on social media therefore now represents a far greater risk to councils than engaging. Local people will still use these networks to talk about the council whether they add their voice to the conversation or not and local people will expect their council to engage with them on their terms, via their channels, and to be openly available online. It is becoming increasingly clear that if councils don't use these tools, then local people will do it for them, and bypass the council entirely.

## 9.     Why do Councillors use it?

Individual Councillors increasingly use social media as their chosen communication tool for similar reasons. It helps you find out local peoples' concerns and opinions on a range of matters. It enables you to connect with a different type of resident whom you may not have been able to reach before.

It boosts the number of people you can potentially reach with key messages, including the local, or even national press who will be monitoring Councillors' social media postings. In effect each tweet, post or comment is a mini-press release which reaches its audience immediately.

Rather than traditional forms of communicating such as the occasional newsletter through the door which was in effect one-way communication, social media establishes two-way communication so you can get instant feedback on issues, and allows you to modify your proposals in line with local thinking. It also enables you to learn about breaking news in your area and what is concerning your residents and receive real-time updates about what is happening.

Social media can also raise your profile and wider awareness of the work you do in your ward which has often not been widely known.

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It allows you to share your own opinions on important issues and show your personality, allowing you to appear more human and relatable. People often don't fully know or understand the role of Councillors and may have negative perceptions. Social media allows you to show others what you do, your interests and what motivates you. This can help foster a better understanding of local government and counter some of the negativity that exists.

You can take part in conversations which are already happening in your neighbourhood. If you are not part of those conversations you can't be influencing and shaping your community and hearing what the real concerns are. People increasingly expect their Councillors to be contactable via social media and if you're not they may bypass you altogether.

Please also remember that the rules around what can and can't be said in pre-election periods would apply equally to social media.

## 10. Tips for effective use of Social Media

There are FOUR principles which should be applied to all social media activity. It should be:

Polite
Respectful of others' viewpoints
Open
Professional

Always ensure that content in your social media postings is:
- accurate
- up-to-date
- objective
- balanced
- interesting
- informative

Social media is about the 'now' so keep it up to date and fresh. Only post if you have something of interest and value to say – if you post too often and are too self-centred you risk turning people off and the message being lost when you do have something important or interesting to communicate.

You might find it helpful to set a specific time each day or each week to write new content or respond to questions and comments. Set notifications so that you'll alerted when someone else mentions you, responses to something you've said or comments on a topic you're interested in.

Decide how you are going to use social media, this could be responding to others when they raise questions or issues, regular updates on what you've been doing as a Councillor, regular updates on council policies and actions, signposting local

events, seeking opinions on local issues or sharing wider points of interest such as national or international news and views.

Be mindful of your tone. Be polite and professional. Professional doesn't mean be pompous or use jargon – social media is an informal way of communicating – but it is about projecting an image to the world of how you want to be seen.

Be open. People should always be able to identify who is posting. While you may want to use a nickname as a handle you are a public figure  so don't pretend to be somebody you're not or hide behind anonymity even when you are posting about private matters as you will be under scrutiny and attract suspicion if you are not open.

Be visible. Make it easy for people to find you online by sharing and publicising your social media account details. When posting make sure you mention your location so this will be found by search engines and use hashtags.

Increase your followers by following other accounts. Also make sure you regularly retweet, share, comment and like posts from others.

Above all it's about communication and interaction so be interactive but be respectful. Disagree with people but don't get personal.  Politics can inevitably be passionate but it damages your image and that of your fellow Councillors in the eyes of the public if you are seen to be rude, abusive or unwilling to listen respectfully. If you are using social media for anything other than council activities check your privacy settings and think about having separate accounts, especially for things like Facebook. It is good practice to try and separate your personal postings from those you are posting in your role as a Councillor.

And be clear when you are posting about council matters that you are expressing personal or party views rather than speaking on behalf of the Council. You should make this clear on your profile. If you have an official role within the Council, for example as leader or a portfolio holder you should always check with the Communications Team and use official council channels wherever possible before commenting on behalf of the Council.

If you do have privacy settings on personal accounts make sure they are up-to-date and accurate and do not accept 'friend requests' from people you do not know.


## 11. Pitfalls and dangers of social media

Being on social media means that people can contact you at any time, day or night, which can be a strength if it's an urgent matter, but it may also lead to the expectation that you will be able to respond to all issues immediately. This expectation is not necessarily realistic and can lead to you feeling very pressurised. It may therefore by helpful to tell people when your account will be checked in your profile.

Social media can be 'no holds barred'. You will be aware that the tone of debate on social media can at times be very unpleasant. People can very quickly get very angry about things on social media and people, who may not even know each other, can either egg people on to be abusive or else get into ferocious rows. You should always avoid getting drawn into unpleasant debates or 'rising to the bait'

While one of the strengths of social media is its inclusivity – some are  generally open to anyone in the community and you can find people with similar interest or viewpoints you may not have known - it also risks being exclusive, particularly when it comes to political debate, creating what is known as an 'echo chamber'. People generally choose to follow people or media that share their outlook on life and there is a danger that you constantly get a one-sided view. As a politician there can be a danger you only follow people who reinforce your own world view. It is important also to follow people who can put forward alternative views to you so that you can get a more rounded view of issues and see things form different perspectives.

Social media can also be addictive. Many people use social media constantly even if they have nothing important to say. Communicate only when you have something important to get across as otherwise the value can be lost and people will stop listening if they feel bombarded.

Remember also to consider everything you post as being a permanent record. Even if you decide to delete something, somebody else might have saved it so always think before you post – are you saying something you are happy to have on the record?

If you had a social media account before you were elected as a Councillor you may wish to review your historical posts. You may have posted personal content or views that you no longer agree with. If you think that historical posts might cause embarrassment or reputational damage to you or the Council you may wish to delete them. It is important to note that although you posted your comments before you were a Councillor, they are still being broadcast so they can be linked to you and shared by others.

## 12. Complaints

As well as the pitfalls of reputational damage through misuse of social media, there are also more formal issues to consider. Complaints may be made either to the Council or to your political group about a posting or comment you may have made. So you will need to be aware of how complaints will be handled by the Council *(see the Local Assessment Procedure on complaints handling or contact the Monitoring Officer for further details),*

The following sections look at some specific areas you need to be aware of.

## 13. The Code of Conduct

When you post on social media the Arun District Council Code of Conduct may apply to your postings.

Please bear in mind that under the Localism Act 2011 the Code only applies to you when you are in your role as a Councillor. So things you post which are purely private matters unrelated to your role as a Councillor or council business will not be caught by the Code.

However, clearly if your social media account identifies you as Cllr X, for Arun District Council, then potentially you would bring yourself within the scope of the Code, even if your communication did not relate to Council business. Conversely of course simply saying Mr or Ms X at the top may not get around the Code if you then start talking about council business.

As a broad rule of thumb if you can be identified as a Councillor when you are using social media, either by account name or how you describe yourself or by what you comment upon and how you comment, the requirements of the Code are likely to apply. In any case even private comments which are considered disrespectful or abusive will cause reputational damage. People are still likely to view you as a public figure and council representative and you may also be subject to party discipline.

## 14. Pre-determination

As a Councillor, you are aware that when you act in a quasi-judicial capacity, for example on a Planning Committee or Licensing Committee, you should not make up your mind about an issue that is to be formally decided upon, before you have heard all the relevant information.

You are allowed to be predisposed to a particular view but not to have gone so far as to have predetermined your position. It is important to remember therefore that anything relevant you might have said about particular issues on social media could be used as evidence of your having made up your mind in advance of hearing all of the relevant information. This could prevent you voting on the issue at a later date.

## 15. Criminal Offences

These generally apply to you already in your conduct as a Councillor, but it is worth considering them as they apply to social media too.

**Harassment –** it is a criminal offence to repeatedly pursue a campaign against someone where this is likely to cause alarm, harassment, nuisance or distress

**Data Protection and the General Data Protection Regulation –** it is illegal to publish personal data about individuals unless they have given you their permission.

As a Councillor you are a data controller in your own right and therefore personally responsible for what you publish. Make sure you understand the requirements of the GDPR and the Data Protection Act.

**Incitement –** it is a criminal offence to incite any criminal act

**Discrimination and Racially Aggravated Offences (or any other protected characteristic) –** it is a criminal offence to make a discriminatory remark about anyone based on a 'Protected Characteristic' as defined in the Equality Act (such as their race, religion, sexual orientation etc).

**Malicious & Obscene Communications –** it is a criminal offence to send malicious or obscene communications

## 16. Civil Law

**Defamation –** It is against the law to make a false statement about someone which damages their personal or professional reputation. If you pass on information originally posted by others (e.g. retweet), you may still be held equally responsible as the original commentator. This can also apply to publishing images. If you are found liable to another person, you could be ordered to pay large sums of money as damages. *A High Court example is Lord McAlpine-v-Sally Bercow (2013).*

**Copyright -** The legal ownership of the contents of documents, photos, videos and music belong to the person who created them. You could be in breach of copyright if you reproduce such material without the owner's permission. Always ask permission before you use someone else's material. The cost of legal action may be very expensive.

## 17. Managing your social media account

We would advise that you maintain separate social media accounts if you intend to manage an account which relates to your work as a Councillor and that you do not post personal or family related information on such sites. By keeping your accounts separate in this way, you are able to adjust the security settings for each to suit your appropriate audiences (for example, your 'Councillor' account may be open to all, whereas your 'personal' account may be restricted to family and friends).

## 18. Dealing with defamatory or abusive content

If you receive defamatory comments on your social media account, most social media sites have an option to report these. Depending on the seriousness of the matter, you may wish to take it up with the police.

Councillors who wish to report defamatory comments made by an ADC employee or Councillor should also contact the Communications team in the first instance. This will then be reported internally through the appropriate channels.

Above all do not get drawn into defamatory or protracted debates.

## 19. Dealing with online abuse and trolling

Disagreement and challenge is a key feature of democratic debate and can be healthy and helpful. However, it can become abusive and this is particularly the case online. While it isn't possible to prevent online abuse, you are able to control how you react and respond to it. Here are some tips:

Be clear about what you expect from others when interacting with them on social media, for example you could state in your profile or blog that you will not tolerate abuse or harassment and that you will delete and report and inappropriate comments.

Don't put up with abuse or harassment. Don't be afraid to 'block', 'mute' or 'report' abusive comments or users. However, do not block people simply because they disagree with you provided they are doing so respectfully.

Consider whether it might be better to ignore abusive comments and users. 'Trolls' commonly have very few followers and may not even be located within your community. By responding you may fuel an argument and give the 'troll' the oxygen of publicity. While it may be difficult not to challenge unpleasant or inaccurate comments and could lead to suggestions that you are ignoring an issue, it may be more sensible and successful in the long run.

Above all, while it may be difficult and feel unfair it is important to remain calm and polite. Sometimes people can become frustrated, particularly if they are trying to resolve an issue with a council service, and this can result in angry and critical comments. If you respond politely and helpfully this may diffuse the situation and the user's tone may change and become less angry and more constructive. When dealing with challenging comments and users it may be helpful, when responding, to stick to facts and not offer views or opinions.

## 20.  Security and social media

Security is a significant issue for social media accounts and the online community often use social media to deliver viruses. It is very important that you follow the below guidelines:

- do not use the same passwords for social media that you use to access corporate  systems
- do not follow links on social media pages that are posted by individuals or organisations that you do not know
- do not download software posted or recommended by individuals or organisations that you do not know
- if you find content that looks suspicious in any way, close your browser and do not return to that page

- do not share your usernames or passwords with anyone
- do not disclose your username or password to anyone

**What to do if you get hacked**

If your account is hacked, log into the social networking site and change the password as soon as possible. Delete all the offensive or spam messages sent from the account (you may wish to print a record of these if you are considering taking the matter further). Report the incident to the respective social media organisation (e.g. Twitter, Facebook). Depending on the seriousness of the offence, you may consider reporting it to the police.

## 21. Training

The Communications team provide one-to-one or group training courses in social media skills, depending on your needs.

If you are interested in receiving training in social media, please contact the team at public.relations@arun.gov.uk or call Claire Pritchard on 01903 737613 or Amanda Harding 01903 767604 to discuss your needs further.

## 22. Summary of good practice

- Think about the content
- Be aware of your status – are you speaking as a politician or an individual?
- Express your personality but be aware how comments and views might be perceived or (deliberately) misinterpreted
- Tolerate different views but steer away from abusive and offensive posts
- Beware the irony
- Let things go - avoid arguments with provocative or vexatious people

**The do's and don'ts for using social media**

Follow the below suggestions for 'what to do' and 'what not to do' when using social media to effectively engage with your followers and to avoid potential problems.

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**DO:**

**Remember that as a Councillor you are an ambassador for Arun District Council**

- write as you would speak (I / We)
- use appropriate language
- use a positive and engaging tone
- ensure your post is informative
- check information is true or correct before you share
- use common sense
- ensure your post is timely
- make use of available pictures (see our *'Filming and Photographic Policy')
- ask permission before taking a picture you intend to use
- include useful and relevant links
- check any links within your post are working
- correct any errors as soon as you are aware an error has been made
- acknowledge and respond to direct messages within a reasonable specified timeframe
- use security settings to block unwanted language
- keep passwords safe and secure
- (*Please note that the Filming and Photographic Policy is currently under review)

**DO NOT:**

- use technical jargon
- post a picture of any person without obtaining their consent
- refer to other Councillors or officers without their prior approval
- publish contact details of Councillors or officers without their approval
- post when you are "tired or emotional"
- make discriminatory or offensive comments about people
- criticise Councillors or officers
- disclose confidential information
- discuss sensitive matters
- engage in arguments
- use abusive language
- make comments that could be inflammatory
- publish anything that might be interpreted as sexist, ageist, homophobic or anti-faith
- try to secure a benefit for yourself or disadvantage others
- allow anyone else to access to your social media accounts

Remember the press may follow your social media accounts and anything you write **cannot** be deleted or removed from cyberspace.

If you are in any doubt about a post or comment you have received, made, or responded to, please contact the Communications team

# Social Media

# Guidance
# For
# Councillors

**Endorsed by Cabinet – Decision ref C/005/310516**
**Review May 2018**

# Contents

## 1.    About this document

This guidance document is for **Councillors** of Arun District Council and has been
created to provide information about the Council's social media policy requirements
and 'best practice' advice in the use of social media accounts.
This document should be read alongside the authority's **Information Security
Policy** and **Internet and Email Acceptable Usage Agreement.** There is a separate
social media policy for staff.

Social Media is a fast evolving environment and as such, this guidance is a **live**
document which will be updated as significant developments arise. It will be available
on the Councillor's intranet.

## 2.    Social media accounts

There are four types of social media account:

- Corporate Accounts – managed by the communications team
- Departmental Accounts – professional accounts managed by an officer on
  behalf of the Council
- Personal Accounts – managed by Councillors for their personal use
- Councillor @arun.dc accounts – managed by Councillors for their ADC
  Councillor use only

As Councillors do not have responsibilities for managing Corporate or Departmental
accounts, this document applies solely to the use of 'Personal' social media
accounts.

It is the responsibility of individual councillors to manage their social media accounts.

To ensure the appropriate, safe and effective use of social media, Councillors are
advised to follow these guidelines.

## 3.    Who to contact for help

If you are unclear about any matter relating to social media for Arun District Council
use, please contact our Communications Team for further advice or guidance.

**Contact:  public.relations@arun.gov.uk**

Arun District Council IT department do not support personal social media accounts,
therefore, please do not contact them as they are unable to provide advice or
guidance.

## 4.    Choosing the right channel

There are a wide range of social media channels available, some of the most
popular being:

- Twitter

- Facebook
- You Tube
- Linkedin
- Pintrest
- Flickr

It is important to consider which channels are most likely to reach the target audience you would like to engage with and the means by which you would like to communicate with them (eg two-way conversation, passing on information, visuals etc):

**Twitter** is ideal for 'talking' to your audience directly to give them timely information. It is more appropriate to use twitter to communicate things that are happening 'now' or within the next day or so as posts have a short 'shelf-life'.

**Facebook** is ideal for posting information and pictures which can be shared by users eg events, what's going on in the local community, developments to previously posted information.

**You Tube** is for uploading video footage for people to watch and is by far the most popular video site on the web today.

**Linkedin** is an ideal way to connect with likeminded individuals or people with similar career paths and HR departments use it regularly as a recruitment tool.

**Pintrest** is a photo sharing website which takes its name from the term 'pin board'.

**Flickr** is also a photo sharing website and provides a way to create a collage of photographs eg places to visit, and can be used to show how something may be changing over time eg regenerations projects.

## 5.    Setting up a social media account

Managing a social media account can be very time consuming as it needs to be regularly updated. Before setting up an account, you should ask yourself the following questions:

**Why** do you think you need a social media account?

**How** will you manage the account? How much time will you be able to dedicate to it?

**What** information will you be communicating through the account?

***IT IS BETTER NOT TO HAVE A SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT THAN TO HAVE ONE THAT CANNOT BE PROPERLY MANAGED.***

### 5.1   Use of email addresses in setting up a personal social media account

Councillors must **not** use their @arun.gov.uk email address to set up personal social media accounts, for security reasons. Only personal email addresses can be used

for this purpose and if a Council email address has been used, the account may be closed requiring that a new one be set up.

It is important to note that the closing of a social media account due to the misuse of an email address in this way may result in significant loss to that account eg loss of followers.  Arun District Council cannot take responsibility for any such loss.

**Choosing your user name**

When choosing your username for a social media account, as this name will appear in the public domain, it is important that is not misleading to your audience.  A personal social media account should not give followers the impression that the account represents an organisation.

In particular, if you are setting up an account to support your role as a councillor, you should choose an account name that clearly distinguishes it from that of Arun District Council's social media accounts.

To this end, it is strongly suggested that you choose words that clearly show that the account is a personal one (eg for a twitter account, you might choose @your name or @councillorname but not @aruncouncil or @arunplanning).

Note that a maximum of 15 characters are allowed for twitter usernames.

**Using a disclaimer**

When setting up a social media account that you intend to use in relation to your role as councillor, it is strongly advised that you must include the below disclaimer on the account so it is clearly accessible to your followers:

*'The views posted represent my own and are not attributed to any other person or organisation.'*

**5.2   Use of email addresses in setting up a Councillor@arundc social media account**

Councillors must not use an arun email address to set up personal social media accounts.  For security reasons, only Cllr email addresses can be used for this purpose.

The Council will control the password so that the site can be removed should the Councillor leave the Council or the site needs to be closed for another reason.

**Choosing your user name**

When you are setting up an account to support your role as a Councillor, you can only choose an account name that clearly identifies you as a part of Arun District Council's social media accounts ie. CllrMrxy@arun.gov.uk

A standard Council template will be used for these Cllr social media sites so that the link between the Councillor and the Council itself is clearly identified.

## 6.    Using Social Media

There are FOUR principles which should be applied to all social media activity.  It should be:

- Meaningful
- Respectful
- Transparent
- Ethical

**The do's and don'ts for using social media**

Follow the below suggestions for 'what to do' and 'what not to do' when using social media to effectively engage with your followers and to avoid potential problems.

**DO:**

***Remember that as a Councillor you are an ambassador for Arun District Council***

- write as you would speak (I / We)
- use appropriate language
- use a positive and engaging tone
- ensure your post is informative
- use common sense
- ensure your post is timely
- make use of available pictures (see our *'Filming and Photographic Policy')
- include useful and relevant links
- check any links within your post are working
- correct any errors as soon as you are aware an error has been made
- acknowledge and respond to direct messages within a reasonable specified timeframe
- use security settings to block unwanted language
- keep passwords safe and secure
- (*Please note that the Filming and Photographic Policy is currently under review)

**DO NOT:**

- use technical jargon
- post a picture of any person without obtaining their consent
- refer to other councillors or officers without their prior approval
- publish contact details of councillors or officers without their approval
- make discriminatory or offensive comments about people
- criticise councillors or officers
- disclose confidential information
- discuss sensitive matters

- engage in arguments
- use abusive language
- make comments that could be inflammatory
- publish anything that might be interpreted as sexist, ageist, homophobic or anti-faith
- try to secure a benefit for yourself or disadvantage others

Remember the press may follow your social media accounts and anything you write **cannot** be deleted or removed from cyberspace.

If you are in any doubt about a post or comment you have received, made, or responded to, please contact the Communications team.

## 7.     Code of Conduct

When you post on a social media site, in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the Member's Code of Conduct (May 2015) will apply, and when acting in the capacity of Councillor, Members are committed to behaving in a manner that is consistent with certain principles to maintain public confidence in the Council.

If you can be identified as a Councillor when you are using social media, either by account name or how you describe yourself or by what you comment upon and how you comment, the requirements of the Code will apply.

## 8.     Pre-determination

As a Councillor, you are aware that when you act in a quasi-judicial capacity, for example on a Planning Committee or Licensing Committee, you should not make up your mind about an issue that is to be formally decided upon, before you have heard all the relevant information.

You are allowed to be predisposed to a particular view but not to have gone so far as to have predetermined your position. It is important to remember therefore that anything relevant you might have said about particular issues on social media could be used as evidence of your having made up your mind in advance of hearing all of the relevant information. This could prevent you voting on the issue at a later date.

## 9.     Criminal Offences

These generally apply to you already in your conduct as a Councillor, but it is worth considering them as they apply to social media too.

**Harassment –** it is a criminal offence to repeatedly pursue a campaign against someone where this is likely to cause alarm, harassment, nuisance or distress

**Data Protection –** it is illegal to publish personal data about individuals unless they have given you their permission. As a Councillor you are a data controller in your own right and therefore personally responsible for what you publish.

**Incitement –** it is a criminal offence to incite any criminal act

**Discrimination and Racially Aggravated Offences (or any other protected characteristic) –** it is a criminal offence to make a discriminatory remark about anyone based on a 'Protected Characteristic' as defined in the Equality Act (such as their race, religion, sexual orientation etc).

**Malicious & Obscene Communications –** it is a criminal offence to send malicious or obscene communications

## 10. Civil Law

**Defamation –** It is against the law to make a false statement about someone which damages their personal or professional reputation. If you pass on information originally posted by others (eg retweet), you may still be held equally responsible as the original commentator. This can also apply to publishing images. If you are found liable to another person, you could be ordered to pay large sums of money as damages. *A High Court example is Lord McAlpine-v-Sally Bercow (2013).*

## Copyright

The legal ownership of the contents of documents, photos, videos and music belong to the person who created them. You could be in breach of copyright if you reproduce such material without the owner's permission. Always ask permission before you use someone else's material. The cost of legal action may be very expensive.

## 11. Managing your social media account

We would strongly advise that you maintain separate social media accounts if you intend to manage an account which relates to your work as a councillor and that you do not post personal or family related information on such sites. By keeping your accounts separate in this way, you are able to adjust the security settings for each to suit your appropriate audiences (for example, your 'councillor' account may be open to all, whereas your 'personal' account may be restricted to family and friends).

## 12. Dealing with defamatory or abusive content

If you receive defamatory or abusive comments on your social media account, most social media sites have an option to report these. Depending on the seriousness of matter, you may wish to take it up with the police.
Councillors who wish to report defamatory comments made by an ADC employee or Councillor should also contact the Communications team in the first instance. This will then be reported internally through the appropriate channels. (4)

## 13. Security and social media

Security is a significant issue for social media accounts and the online community often use social media to deliver viruses. It is very important that you follow the below guidelines:

- do not use the same passwords for social media that you use to access corporate systems
- do not follow links on social media pages that are posted by individuals or organisations that you do not know
- do not download software posted or recommended by individuals or organisations that you do not know
- if you find content that looks suspicious in any way, close your browser and do not return to that page
- do not share your usernames or passwords with anyone
- do not disclose your username or password to anyone

**What to do if you get hacked**

If your account is hacked, log into the social networking site and change the password as soon as possible. Delete all the offensive or spam messages sent from the account (you may wish to print a record of these if you are considering taking the matter further). Report the incident to the respective social media organisation (eg twitter, facebook). Depending on the seriousness of the offence, you may consider reporting it to the police.

## 14. Training

The Communications team provide one-to-one or group training courses in social media skills, depending on your needs.

If you are interested in receiving training in social media, please contact the team at public.relations@arun.gov.uk or call Claire Pritchard on 01903 737607 to discuss your needs further.

Please see our Social Media User Guides which give help and advice in getting started on social media:

- Twitter – User Guide for Councillors
- Facebook – User Guide for Councillors
- Facebook – Advanced User Guide for Councillors

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# ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## REPORT TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
## ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2020

| SUBJECT: | Register of Assessments of Complaints against Councillors |
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|---|---|
| **REPORT AUTHOR:** | Nigel Lynn – Chief Executive |
| **DATE:** | August 2020 |
| **EXTN:** | 01903 737600 |

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**
This report updates the Committee on the complaints against Councillors received so far in 2020. The Committee is responsible for maintaining high standards of conduct by Members of the District and Town & Parish Councils, for monitoring operation of the Code of Conduct, and for considering the outcome of investigations in the event of breaches of the Code.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Committee is asked to resolve that:

   (1) the Register of Complaints against Councillors and progress of any outstanding complaints be noted.

## 1.0   BACKGROUND AND COMPLAINT ACTIVITY

1.1   A Register of Assessments of Complaints against Councillors is updated regularly by the (Acting) Monitoring Officer and distributed to Members of the Standards Committee. This assists Members in making decisions on where to direct training and to review any lessons learned. The register is also a reference source for Members of other similar complaints, when dealing with assessments.

1.2   In 2020, the following complaints have been received, progressed or completed. Members are requested to note that progress with some earlier complaints has unfortunately been stalled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

| Case Ref | Council | Allegation/Complaint | Outcome |
|---|---|---|---|
| 19/09 & 19/11 | Littlehampton Town | Breach of Littlehampton Town Council's Code of Conduct paragraphs 3.1,3.2(b), 5.0 and 5.0(a) | Two complaints received. Stage 1 investigation complete – informal resolution agreed to recommend further training, to be |

| | | | Showing disrespect at a Town Council meeting. | delivered by the Town Council. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19/10 | Arun District Council | Breach of ADC's Code paras 2.1 (9) & (10)<br><br>Showing disrespect at an Overview Select Committee meeting. | Complaint withdrawn on the basis of insufficient evidence to take forward |
| 19/12 | Aldwick Parish Council | Breach of Aldwick Code, Para 2.1(10)<br><br>Showing disrespect to a member of the public. | No further action as Subject Member no longer a Councillor |
| 19/13 | Felpham Parish Council | Breach of Code, Paras 1,2,3,4,5,7,10,11<br><br>Dissatisfaction with a Council policy. Showing disrespect to members of the public who challenged a policy decision. | Complaint rejected – not a Code of Conduct matter |
| 19/14, 19/15, 19/16 | Felpham Parish Council | Breach of Code Paras 1,2,5,6,7,10,11<br><br>Showing disrespect to members of the public; inferring that a Council Policy had been adopted whilst still in draft form. | Three complaints received – being taken to Stage 2 for consideration by Assessment Panel. |
| 19/17 | Arun District Council | Breach of Code, Para 10<br><br>Showing disrespect to a fellow Councillor. | Withdrawn by complainant, public apology issued |
| 20/01 | Arun District Council | Not adhering to social distancing guidelines. | Rejected – not a Code of Conduct matter |
| 20/02 | Arun District Council and Bognor Regis Town Council | Breach of Code (paras not identified)<br><br>Unlawful surveillance activities. | Rejected – not a Code of Conduct matter |
| 20/03 | Arun District Council | Breach of Code, Para 8<br><br>Not withdrawing from meeting at point of | Informal resolution agreed – apology issued. Refresher on making open minded declarations |

| | | decision-making or failing to make the appropriate declaration. | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 20/04 | Arun District Council | Breach of Code – Paras 8, 9, and 10.<br><br>Conduct at meetings | Stage 1 investigation |
| 20/05 | Arundel Town Council | Breach of Code, Paras 6, 8, & 10<br><br>Disrespect shown on social media | Informal resolution in terms of awareness when using social media. |
| 20/06 | Arun District Council | Breach of Code, Paras 1 & 8.<br><br>Conduct at meetings | Initial assessment – pre Stage 1 |
| 20/07 | Arun District Council & Littlehampton Town Council | Breach of Code – Para 10<br><br>Disrespect shown on social media | Initial assessment – pre Stage 1 |

## 2.0    REASON FOR THE INFORMATION

2.1    To comply with the adopted Code of Conduct and Local Assessment Procedure.

## 3.0    OPTIONS

1.  None as all the complaints have been considered in line with the adopted Local Assessment Procedure.

## 4.0    BACKGROUND PAPERS

Members Code of Conduct          https://www.arun.gov.uk/complaints-against-councillors
Local Assessment Procedure       https://www.arun.gov.uk/complaints-against-councillors

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