SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLORS

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ARUN
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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~~is available on the ~~Councillor's intranet~~Members' Area of SharePoint.

The Local Government Association has produced a comprehensive set of social media guidance for Councillors that is available through the link below, and specific sections of the guidance a referred to within the Council's guidance.
Social media guidance for councillors | Local Government Association

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. 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

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
- Instagram
-
- WhatsApp
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- InstagramWhatsApp
-
- 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.

The Local Government Association has produced a guide to using Twitter here: **Guide to using Twitter | Local Government Association**

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 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.

The Local Government Association has produced a guide to using Facebook here: **Guide to using Facebook | Local Government Association**

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.

It is also important to keep in mind that if councillors are exchanging messages regarding council business, as opposed to party group matters, then those messages may fall within the scope of the Freedom of Information Act and/or Environmental Information Regulations and therefore the same approach and care should be taken regarding WhatsApp messages as is taken in respect of emails and other forms of communication.

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.

The Local Government Association has produced a guide to using YouTube here:

[**Guide to using YouTube | Local Government Association**](#)

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.

The Local Government Association has produced a guide to using Nextdoor here: [**Guide to using Nextdoor | Local Government Association**](#)

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.

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@arun.dc 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 username

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., mMessages 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?

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.

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 be alerted when someone else mentions you, responds 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 does no'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 Chair of the Council, lLeader or a portfolio holdercommittee chair, 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'.

Whilst 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 Members' 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 acting in your role as a councillor. Therefore 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 of the relevant information. This includes the information presented to you within a report and orally at the committee meeting itself.

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 is not possible to prevent online abuse, you are able to control how you react and respond to it. Online abuse has increased significantly over recent years and it is important that Councillors understand how best to respond to such abuse, and where they can go for guidance when the subject of abuse. 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.

➢ Do not put up with abuse or harassment. Do not 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.

The Local Government Association has produced a guide to tackling online abuse that can be found here:
➢ **Guide to tackling online abuse | Local Government Association**

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.

If you have any questions regarding any aspect of your social media content and its relationship with the Members' Code of Conduct, please contact the Monitoring Officer at **Monitoring.Officer@arun.gov.ul** or call Daniel Bainbridge on 01903 737607.

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.

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
- misquote, misrepresent or make personal criticisms of Councillors and 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 an improper benefit for yourself or disadvantage others improperly
- 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.