

Arun District Council

REPORT TO:	Standards Committee 23.02.23
SUBJECT:	Review of Social Media Guidance - February 2023
LEAD OFFICER:	Daniel Bainbridge – Monitoring Officer
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor Paul English
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION: This report seeks the views of the Standards Committee relating to the review of the Social Media Guidance document for Councillors.	
DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT: None	
FINANCIAL SUMMARY: No financial implications as this is an information report.	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The Social Media Guidance for Councillors, adopted in December 2020, requires reviewing to ensure that it remains relevant and up-to-date.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1. consider and comment upon the revised Social Media Guidance for Councillors; and,
- 2.2. recommend to Full Council that the revised Social Media Guidance be approved.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1. The use of social media across the political spectrum has increased significantly since the 2019 local elections and its use can expose Councillors to criticism, putting them at risk of challenge and placing them in vulnerable positions where they feel they must provide a response. The Guidance ensures that Councillors have sufficient advice regarding the use of social media and helps to reduce the risk of making them the subject of a Code of Conduct complaint or other legal ramifications.

4. DETAIL

- 4.1. A review of Code of Conduct complaints received in recent years has identified an increase in complaints that relate to engagement with social media, either in the quality of comments/responses or the appropriateness of individual posts.
- 4.2. Whilst it is accepted that the public find social media to be a useful tool in communicating with their elected Members (and vice versa), and for finding out information relating to Council activity, it is important that any information shared is accurate and that Councillors are not drawn into situations where a breach of the Code of Conduct may be take place or be perceived.
- 4.3. It is therefore vital that Councillors have sufficient guidance and advice to steer them in the use of social media, and to be able to use social media to its best advantage.
- 4.4. Since the Social Media Guidance was adopted by the Council, the Local Government Association has updated its social media guidance for Councillors. The revised guidance document attached to this report at Appendix 1 draws on the Monitoring Officer's experience in dealing with Code of Conduct complaints and advice provided to Councillors, together with the LGA's updated guidance.
- 4.5. The Committee is asked to consider the proposed changes to the guidance.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1. This report forms a consultation tool with Committee Members.

6. OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

- 6.1. None.

7. COMMENTS BY THE GROUP HEAD OF FINANCE/SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 7.1. As this is an information report, no financial implications are identified.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. As this is an information report, no risk assessment considerations are necessary.

9. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE & MONITORING OFFICER

- 9.1. The Monitoring Officer's comments are contained within the body of the report.

For items 10 – 17 below, there are no direct impacts arising from this report.

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT
 11. HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT
 12. PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT
 13. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE
 14. CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE
 15. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT
 16. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT
 17. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS
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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Local Government Association – Social media guidance for councillors
[Social media guidance for councillors | Local Government Association](#)