

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2020

PART A : REPORT

SUBJECT: New Social Media Guidance for Councillors

REPORT AUTHOR: Nigel Lynn – Chief Executive
DATE: August 2020
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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>