

MEETING	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
DATE	30, SEPTEMBER, 2013
SUBJECT	SOCIAL MEDIA
PURPOSE	PRESENT THE WELSH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION'S GUIDELINES ON SOCIAL MEDIA TO COUNCILLORS
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1. INTRODUCTION.

- 1.1 A revolution is taking place in how we communicate. We are now experiencing the greatest ever change in the way information is created and owned, and the speed at which information can be shared. This leads to a change in the way we live, work, and possibly in the way we talk and think.
- 1.2 The all-inclusive term social media is used to refer to the range of online multi-media methods that are used to create content and for two-way communication. They can be accessed through a smart phone, a laptop, a tablet or a smart television.

2. SOCIAL MEDIA: A GUIDE FOR COUNCILORS.

- 2.1 On 16th August, 2013 the Welsh Local Government Association published the social Media: A Guide for Councillors document on their website. Access to this documents can be found on <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/social-mediaguide-to-councillors>.
- 2.2 The purpose of this guide is to provide guidance to councillors who are keen to use social media as a method of sharing information, opening new discussions with people in their community and beyond, and attracting the interest of their electorate in a productive two-way discussion. The guide focuses mainly on the social media *Facebook* and *Twitter*.
- 2.3 The guide lists a number of benefits to councillors of using social medial, such as
 - increasing numbers of people are using Twitter and Facebook as their preferred method of communication, leading to the potential to establish two-way communication with all of them;
 - it's an useful method of finding out what people are talking about locally, their concerns and their interests;
 - it's a good way of making the electorate more aware of the work being done by councillors;

- it allows you to have a conversation with a range of people that you would not be able to physically meet and who do not traditionally seek out their local representatives;
- it's a method of immediate communication, where you can receive immediate feedback on your ideas and manifesto to allow you to adapt the proposals in line with local opinion.

3. SOMCE CONSIDERATIONS.

3.1 In considering the contents of the *Social Media: A Guide for Councillors* document (WLGA), it seems there are areas within the guidance which are relevant to the Democratic Services Committee remit e.g.

- the use of social media in committees, and what the constitution states;
- the Welsh language, and the guidance given in the Council's Language Scheme;
- training in terms of facilitating councillors to
 - start using social media
 - make wider use of social media;
- the successful use already being made of social media by some elected members in Gwynedd as an example of good practice;

and matters that are relevant to the remit of the Standards Committee, e.g.

- the code of conduct and the legal implications of using social media;
- steps taken in cases of misuse of social media.

3.2 The use of social media amongst councillors is an area which has been recognised by this Committee as a subject which requires further attention following the number of complaints to the Ombudsman resulting from misuse of the media.

3.3 Based on these initial considerations, it is believed that more detailed consideration should be given to the above and to the contents of *Social Media: A Guide for Councillors* (WLGA), amending them specifically for Gwynedd and/or creating a specific protocol for the use of social media by councillors. It seems appropriate for this work to be achieved jointly between the Democratic Services Committee and the Standards Committee.

3.4 The Democratic Services Committee met on the 10th September, 2013 to consider a report on this matter when it was decided to elect three members to contribute to the work of the sub-group jointly with the Standards Committee to develop guidelines on social media for Gwynedd.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 It is recommended that the Standards Committee :-

- (a) recommend that Gwynedd should adopt its own guidelines on the use of social media;
- (b) establish a sub-group jointly with the Democratic Services Committee to collaborate on drawing up guidelines on social media for councillors in Gwynedd (with the exact process for achieving this to be agreed between the Chairs of both committees);
- (c) nominate three members of the committee to serve on the sub-group.