

MEETING	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	10 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 a 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 COUNCILLORS

- 2.1 On 16 August 2013 the Welsh Local Government Association published the Social Media: A Guide for Councillors document on their website. A copy of the document is available in Appendix 1.
- 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.
- 2.3.1 The guide lists a number of benefits to councillors of using social media, 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 a 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. SOME 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.

These are only suggestions, and further considerations could arise from the committee's discussions.

3.2 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. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee:-

- a) recommends to the Standards Committee that Gwynedd should adopt its own guidelines on the use of social media.
- b) recommends establishing a sub-group jointly with the Standards 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) nominates [3] members of the committee to serve on the sub-group