



## **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - 17TH SEPTEMBER 2014**

**SUBJECT: SOCIAL MEDIA PROTOCOL FOR ELECTED MEMBERS**

**REPORT BY: INTERIM HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES AND MONITORING OFFICER**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek the views of the Democratic Services Committee on the draft Social Media Protocol for Elected Members set out in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 1.2 To recommend to Council the adoption of the Social Media Protocol.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The draft protocol at Appendix 1 is intended to clearly set out how Elected Members ought to interact with social media both as Councillors and private individuals. In this respect, Part 2.1 of the Protocol refers to the use of social media by Elected Members.
- 2.2 The draft protocol seeks to restrict the use of social media by Elected Members during meetings as set out in part 2.1.5 of the protocol.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 As part of the Council's Communications Strategy, the Council recognises the opportunities that social media can deliver in terms of reputation enhancement, engaging with residents and other interested parties using their platform of choice, encouraging greater two-way dialogue and the insights that social media can provide. If managed appropriately the use of social media as a communications tool for elected members could benefit both the Council and stakeholders from all sections of the community.

### **4. THE REPORT**

- 4.1 Social media is a collective term used to describe online media, which offer easy ways to publish content online and also to facilitate and participate in online conversations, which may invite the posting of comments or contributions or otherwise invite discussion.
- 4.2 Social media can involve social networks eg facebook; professional networks eg LinkedIn; content communities sites eg Flickr and Youtube; blogs eg via sites such as Wordpress and Blogger; micro-blogging sites eg Twitter.
- 4.3 Whilst it is recognised that social media can play an important part in the operation of a democratic society by offering positive opportunities for the Council to engage with the citizens of Caerphilly, it is apparent that the use of social media also presents the Council and elected members with certain risks and challenges and can potentially result in breaches of the Code of Conduct.

- 4.4 It is therefore important that elected members recognise the risks associated with social media and ensure it is not used in a way that breaches the Code of Conduct.
- 4.5 It is intended that the Councils Standards Committee will have regard to the Protocol when determining allegations of breach of the Code of Conduct involving the use of social media.
- 4.6 The draft protocol at Appendix 1 is intended to clearly set out how Elected Members ought to interact with social media both as Councillors and private individuals. In this respect, Part 2.1 of the protocol refers to the use of social media by Elected Members. The draft protocol also seeks to restrict the use of social media by Elected Members during meetings as set out in part 2.1.5 of the Protocol.
- 4.7 Members are asked to provide their views on the draft Protocol and to recommend to Council that the Protocol be adopted.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no equalities implications in respect of this report

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are none directly arising from this report

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are none directly arising from this report.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 The Report reflects the views of the listed consultees.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 Subject to the views of the Democratic Services Committee to recommend to Council that the Social Media Protocol set out in Appendix 1 is adopted

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 To provide Elected Members with guidelines when using social media.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Local Government Act 2000

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Appendices:  
Appendix 1 Draft Social Media Protocol