

Social Media Guidance DRAFT

Social Media provides the public with the opportunity to enjoy freedom of speech and share their views and thoughts to the widest of audiences.

The successful enjoyment of that freedom is however dependent on users having a clear understanding and recognition of what can be the fine line between sharing views and causing offence.

The following Guidance aims to help members stay on the right side of the fine line:

- The first and most overriding point to make is that anything shared on Social Media is legally deemed to be 'published'. Do not publish anything that you would not consider saying to an individual or group of persons.
- What you've 'said' on the web is written down and it's permanent.
- Never put an entry on a social media site that you wouldn't want to see printed in a local newspaper attributed to you.
- Remember that whenever you act or appear to act in your official capacity on social media you should not bring the County Council into disrepute.
- Don't present your personal views, or those of any political party or interest group you belong to, as being those of the council.
- Respect the commitment in the code of conduct. In particular, treat others with respect; comply with equality laws; don't bully, intimidate or harass; don't bring the council into disrepute; or disclose confidential information.
- Remember that information and comments that you make can be broadcast to a large number of people more quickly than other media.
- Libel, copyright and data protection all still apply online.
- Own up: Social media is transparent – The best bloggers admit mistakes rather than try to cover them up (which isn't possible on-line). Amending your text and acknowledgement your mistake – perhaps by putting a line through the offending words, inserting a correction or providing an update section at the bottom of a blog post – shows you are not pretending it never happened, and is much better than just deleting it when dealing with on-line misfires.

General Tips

- The best social media tool is common sense.
- Keep arguments off line
- Don't write in haste. Avoid writing when you are angry, upset, tired or have been drinking.
- Don't retaliate to offensive or defamatory remarks made against you, ask the owner/person making them to remove them.
- Keep an eye on defamatory, untrue or abusive posts from others on your blog or page and remove them as soon as possible to avoid the perception that you condone such views and to prevent any potential libel action being taken against you.
- Don't hide your identity or use a pseudonym when making comments.

And finally.... Stop and think for a few minutes before you press 'post'