City and County of Swansea

Notice of Meeting

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the

Democratic Services Committee

At:	**Committee Room 5 - Guildhall, Swansea**
On:	**Tuesday, 31 July 2018**
Time:	**5.00 pm**
Chair:	**Councillor Peter Black CBE**

Membership:
Councillors: N J Davies, M Durke, L S Gibbard, J A Hale, S M Jones, E T Kirchner, W G Lewis, S Pritchard, B J Rowlands, G J Tanner, L J Tyler-Lloyd and L V Walton

---

Agenda

Page No.

 Next Meeting: Tuesday, 9 October 2018 at 5.00 pm

Huw Evans

Huw Evans
Head of Democratic Services
Monday, 23 July 2018

Contact: Democratic Services - (01792) 636923

City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee

Committee Room 5 - Guildhall, Swansea

Monday, 16 April 2018 at 5.00 pm

Present: Councillor P M Black (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)	**Councillor(s)**	**Councillor(s)**
N J Davies	L S Gibbard	J A Hale
S M Jones	W G Lewis	I E Mann
S Pritchard	C Richards	K M Roberts
B J Rowlands	G J Tanner	L J Tyler-Lloyd
L V Walton		

Officer(s)

Huw Evans	Head of Democratic Services
Allison Lowe	Democratic Services Officer
Tracey Meredith	Head of Legal, Democratic Services and Business Intelligence and Monitoring Officer

Apologies for Absence
Councillor(s): M Durke, K M Griffiths and E T Kirchner

---

22   Disclosure of Personal & Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City & County of Swansea no interests were declared.

23   Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee held on 30 January 2018 be approved and signed as a correct record.

24   Review of Councillors Annual Report Template.

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report which sought to review the Councillors Annual Report Template in order to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and removes any duplication.

He outlined the relevant legislation relating to Councillors Annual Reports and referred to the Statutory Guidance.

The Committee discussed the process that Councillors follow when completing the Annual Reports and it was suggested that the Democratic Services Team should be advised of any training sessions carried out by Councillors that were not provided by the Authority, so that they could be included in the training section of the individual Councillor's web page.

The amendment of web-links being placed in Sections 2 and 5 was fully supported by the Committee.

Resolved that:

1) The amended Councillors Annual Report Templates be adopted.

25   Review of Councillors Handbook (Sections B & C).

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report which sought to review the Councillors Handbook in order to streamline its content and move towards a digital only version.

This report dealt with the remainder of the Councillors Handbook, namely Section B "Support Services" & Section C "Protocols". Sections A and D had already been considered and approved by Council.

The issue of Councillors having to embrace ICT was discussed, together with the speed at which technology advances and Councillors trying to "keep up". It was felt that drop in sessions or 1-2-1 sessions on how to navigate tools such as Office 365 be provided for those who required additional training.

Resolved that:

1) The amended Councillors Handbook be recommended to Council for adoption;

2) The Head of Democratic Services assist the Training Team in surveying Councillors to ascertain their requirement for ICT training.

26   Webcasting & eVoting - Update.

The Head of Democratic Services presented a 'For Information' report to provide an update on the progress with the implementation of Webcasting and eVoting.

Webcasting

The Authority sought quotations via the National Procurement Website for the supply, installation and maintenance for a Webcasting solution for the Council Chamber, Guildhall. Three quotations were received with the tender being awarded to Civico. The contract is for one year with the option to extend for up to a further 60 months. Discussions are ongoing on a Webcasting go live date but it is likely to be during the summer of 2018.

The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that "hot links" would be available to enable viewers to select a specific item within a meeting. The length of time that the webcast would be available to view and the archiving of the broadcasts was also discussed. Further guidance would be sought on the issue of the replication or use of any broadcast or part of a broadcast by a third party.

eVoting

The Authority's delegate mic system within the Council Chamber, Guildhall includes the capability to contact eVoting. The Leader of the Council and Head of Democratic Services anticipate that the eVoting system will be trialled shortly for Cabinet meetings and then rolled out further for Planning Committee a little later, other Committees and ultimately Council.

Further discussions will be needed in order to establish what will be displayed on the screen following each vote at a meeting.

The minutes of the meeting will now only include how those eligible to vote, voted if a named vote was called as outlined in Council Procedure Rule 30.2. However, the breakdown of how each individual voted, will be published online in line with the "City and County of Swansea – Policy Commitments Statement" report adopted by Council on 27 July 2017.

The meeting ended at 5.44 pm

Chair

Report of the Head of Democratic Services

Democratic Services Committee – 31 July 2018

Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2017-2018 (25 May 2017 – 23 May 2018)

Purpose:	To provide the Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2017-2018 for the period 25 May 2017 to 23 May 2018. The report outlines the work of the Committee during that period.
Policy Framework:	None.
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
For Information Only	
Report Author:	Huw Evans
Finance Officer:	Ben Smith
Legal Officer:	Tracey Meredith
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar

1.   Introduction

1.1   The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 required each Principal Council to establish a Democratic Services Committee. The Annual Meeting of Council held on 24 May 2012 originally established the Democratic Services Committee.

1.2   Councillor P M Black was elected Chair of the Democratic Services Committee at the Annual Meeting of Council on 25 May 2017. He was originally elected as Chair of the Committee at the Annual Meeting of Council on 19 May 2016.

1.3   The Democratic Services Committee is serviced by the Head of Democratic Services, Huw Evans.

1.4   The Democratic Services Annual Report is attached as **Appendix A.**

2. Format of Annual Report

2.1 Councillors are asked to comment on the style and format of the Annual Report informally to the Head of Democratic Services as he is keen to ensure that it continues to be an informative, easy to read report.

3. Equality and Engagement Implications

3.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening process took place prior to the consultation period. The outcome indicated that it was low priority and a full report was not required.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications other than those set out in the body of the report.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices:

Appendix A	Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2017-2018 (25 May 2017 to 23 May 2018)

Democratic Services Committee Annual Report 2017-2018
(25 May 2017 to 23 May 2018)

1. Foreword by the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee

1.1   During 2017-2018, the Democratic Services Committee focussed its work on technology and its potential to assist Councillors in their work. It also reviewed the allowances on offer to assist Councillors in carrying out their duties.

1.2   The "Councillor ICT - May 2017 and Beyond" report led to a wider discussion at Council prior to it being adopted by Cabinet. This report set out the allowances for Councillors in relation to ICT together with the other allowances available to Councillors.

1.3   The big innovative lead from the Democratic Services Committee during the period was the drive for Councillors to take up the mantle of the Sustainable Swansea – Fit for the Future programme and to embrace the Self-Service model. Following a recommendation from the Committee, Council adopted this policy meaning that Councillors now submit their allowance and expenses claims via the Oracle system.

1.4   Councillor Annual Reports are another area on which the Committee has focussed its attention. It is pleasing to note the steady progress in the number of Councillors making use of the facility.

1.5   During the year, we examined how to make greater use of digital technology with an aim to assisting Councillors in their roles. This meant the standardisation of the use of Modern.gov software for all agendas and minutes including those of scrutiny.

1.6   The committee also reviewed the training and induction programme put in place for Councillors after the May 2017 elections and made a number of suggestions as to how this might be improved next time.

1.7   This has been a busy period for the Democratic Services Committee. I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the Committee for their time, dedication and support.

1.8   A number of officers have helped considerably with the work of the Committee. In particular, I would mention Huw Evans, Head of Democratic Services, Allison Lowe, Democratic Services Officer and the Democratic Services Team.

Councillor P M Black
Chair of Democratic Services Committee

2. Membership of the Democratic Services Committee

2.1 The membership of the Democratic Services Committee for the period 25 May 2017 to 23 May 2018:

Councillor	Councillor
Peter Black **(Chair)**	Irene E Mann
Nick J Davies	Sam Pritchard
Mike Durke	Christine Richards
Louise S Gibbard	Kelly M Roberts
Kevin M Griffiths	Brigitte J Rowlands
Joe A Hale	Gloria J Tanner
Susan M Jones	Linda J Tyler-Lloyd
Erika T Kirchner	Lesley V Walton
Wendy T Lewis **(Vice Chair)**	

3. Dates of the Democratic Services Committee Meetings

3.1 The Democratic Services Committee met 4 times in 2017-2018:

25 July 2017	30 January 2018
7 November 2017	16 April 2018

4. Attendance Figures by the Members of the Democratic Services Committee

4.1 The attendance figures for each member of the Democratic Services Committee are set out below.

Councillor	Possible	Actual	Attendance by Percentage (%)
Peter M Black	4	4	100
Nick J Davies	4	4	100
Mike Durke	4	1	25
Louise S Gibbard	4	4	100
Kevin M Griffiths	4	2	50
Joe A Hale	4	3	75
Susan M Jones	4	2	50
Erika T Kirchner	4	0	0
Wendy T Lewis	4	4	100
Irene E Mann	4	3	75
Sam Pritchard	4	4	100
Christine Richards	4	3	75
Kelly M Roberts	4	3	75
Brigitte J Rowlands	4	4	100
Gloria J Tanner	4	3	75
Linda J Tyler-Lloyd	4	4	100
Lesley V Walton	4	3	75

5. Democratic Services Committee - Terms of Reference

5.1 The remit of the Democratic Services Committee is set out in **Section 11 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011** and is to:

5.2 Exercise the function of the local authority under section 8(1)(a) Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (designation of Head of Democratic Services).

5.3 Review the adequacy of provision by the authority of staff, accommodation and other resources to discharge Democratic Services functions, including:

    a) Achievement of the Welsh Local Government Association's (WLGA) Member Support and Development Charter;
    b) Councillor Training;
    c) Improvements and innovations such as electronic voting, web casting etc.

5.4 Make reports and recommendations to the authority in relation to such provision.

5.5 It is for a Democratic Services Committee to determine how to exercise those functions.

5.6 To determine whether or not the Councillors period of family absence should be cancelled in accordance with Regulation 34 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

5.7 To determine whether or not to withhold a Councillor's Remuneration should they fail to return following a period of family absence on the date specified in the notice provided.

6. Activities of the Democratic Services Committee

6.1 During the municipal year 2017-2018 the Democratic Services Committee has undertaken a range of activities. The activities are listed below together with a brief synopsis of the work.

6.2 Democratic Services Committee - Overview

Due to the Local Government Elections in May 2017 and the influx of new Councillors on the Committee, the Head of Democratic Services provided an overview of the role, terms of reference and work involved in the Democratic Services Committee.

6.3 Democratic Services Annual Report 2016-2017.

The Head of Democratic Services presented the Democratic Services Annual Report 2016-2017 which outlined the work of the Committee during the period 19 May 2016 - 23 May 2017.

6.4   Councillor Training

The Committee received an overview presentation of the current structure and changes to Organisational Learning, Training and Development and a summary of the e-learning training available.

6.5   Review of Councillor Induction Programme 2017.

The Committee reviewed the Councillor Induction Programme 2017, which had been organised to inform both newly elected and returning Councillors of their roles and the services provided by the Council. It suggested that future programmes should include an element of training focussing on skills as well as improving understanding of the council's procedures and statutory functions.

6.6   Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales – Draft Annual Report 2018-2019 - Consultation

The Committee considered the draft Annual Report published by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and provided a draft response, which was considered by Council prior to submission.

6.7   Review of Councillors Handbook

The Committee reviewed the Councillors Handbook in order to streamline its content and to move towards a digital only version. Repetitive elements were removed and its content was simplified, aiming at making it more user friendly for Councillors and Co-opted Members alike.

6.8   Timing of Council Meetings - Survey

The Committee considered a report on the outcome of the Councillors Survey on Timings of Council Meetings.

6.9   Councillors' Annual Reports 2016-2017

The Committee received information on the number of Annual Reports submitted. The content of the reports related to activities undertaken during the 2016-2017 Municipal Year.

6.10   Councillor Pledge on Standards

The Committee received details on the number of forms completed.

6.11   Councillor-v-Councillor Local Dispute Resolution Protocol

The Committee received details on the number of forms completed.

6.12 Review of Councillors Annual Report Template

The committee reviewed the Councillors Annual Report template in order to ensure that it remained fit for purpose and removed any duplication of duty.

7. Work Programme 2018-2019

7.1 The Committee will consider its work programme at its first meeting.

8. Democratic Services Team 25 May 2017- 23 May 2018

8.1 The Team Structure for Democratic Services and Scrutiny for the period 2017-2018 are set out below. The Posts are all 1 Full Time Equivalent (fte) unless otherwise stated.

8.2 Democratic Services Team

Job Title	Officer Name	Notes
Head of Democratic Services	Huw Evans	-
Democratic Services Officer **(0.5 fte)**	Samantha Woon	-
Democratic Services Officer **(0.5 fte)**	Kate Jones	-
Democratic Services Officer	Gareth Borsden	-
Democratic Services Officer	Jeremy Parkhouse	-
Democratic Services Officer	Allison Lowe	-
Democratic Services Support Officer	Caroline Davies	-
Democratic Services Administrative Assistant	Karen Thomas	-
Democratic Services Support Assistant	Diane Clatworthy	-

8.3 Scrutiny Team

Job Title	Officer Name	Notes
Scrutiny Manager	Dave Mckenna	Up to 30.06.2017
Scrutiny Coordinator	Brij Madahar	Post changed to Scrutiny Team Leader (effective 01.05.2017) due to Scrutiny Manager's planned departure (30.06.2017) and deletion of post.
Scrutiny Officer	Michelle Roberts	-
Scrutiny Research Officer **(0.6 fte)**	Jenna Tucker Selma Abdalla	Until 31.07.2017 From 21.11.2017
Scrutiny Officer	Liz Jordan	-
Scrutiny Officer	Bethan Hopkins	-

9. General Information

9.1 The Democratic Services Committee is keen to see members of the public attending its Meetings. With the exception of confidential items, all business is held in public. All of the public papers are published online www.swansea.gov.uk

9.2 Further information can be provided by Democratic Services: Democratic.Services@swansea.gov.uk or on 01792 63 6923

Cyngor **Abertawe**
Swansea Council

Report of the Head of Democratic Services

Democratic Services Committee - 31 July 2018

Review of Councillors' Broadband and Telephone, ICT and Mobile Phone Allowances - May 2017 & Beyond

Purpose:	To review the Councillors' Broadband and Telephone, ICT and Mobile Phone Allowances - May 2017 & Beyond" Policy which was adopted by Cabinet on 15 December 2016.
Policy Framework:	None.
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	The following be recommended to Cabinet for adoption:

1) The Policy be renamed the "Councillors Information, Communication & Technology (ICT) Allowances - May 2017 & Beyond Policy" or "Councillors ICT Allowances - May 2017 & Beyond Policy" for short.

2) The following note be added to Paragraph 5.3 of the Policy:

   1) The Councillors' ICT Allowance over a 5 year period is £1,808 in total. This amount may be spent at any time during the 5 year term provided the claims are made using the Councillors / Co-opted Members ICT Allowance Claim Form and with relevant receipts.

   2) Any spend exceeding £200 in the final year of the Term of Office must be approved in advance by the Head of Democratic Services in conjunction with the Chief Transformation Officer. They may look at temporary solutions such as providing Authority owned ICT devices.

3) The following condition be added to Paragraph 6.1 of the report:

   "c) Councillors in receipt of the Telephone element of the Councillors' Broadband and Telephone Allowance must allow for their telephone number to be published on the Authority's website and promoted as necessary save in exceptional circumstances".

4)   The views of the Democratic Services Committee are sought in relation to Paragraph 2.10 of the report.

5)   The "Broadband and Telephone Allowance" be renamed the "Data and Telephone Allowance";

6)   Paragraph 7.5 of the Policy be deleted and the section renumbered accordingly.

7)   Paragraph 7.1 of the Policy be amended as follows with an additional second condition also being added:

"7.1 The Authority currently pays a monthly Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance to qualifying Councillors in order to supplement their mobile phone bills due their increased use for Council business providing:

a)   Councillors produce proof on an annual basis of their Mobile Phone contract to the Cabinet Office / Democratic Services Team.

b)   Councillors in receipt of the Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance must allow for their mobile telephone number to be published on the Authority's website and promoted as necessary save in exceptional circumstances".

8)   The following note be added to Paragraph 9.4 of the Policy:

Note:
1)   The Co-opted Members ICT Allowance over a 4 and year period is £361.60 and £441.60 in total respectively. This amount may be spent at any time during the 4-6 year term provided the claims are made using the Councillors / Co-opted Members ICT Allowance Claim Form and with relevant receipts;
2)   Any spend exceeding £40 in the final year of the Term of Office must be approved in advance by the Head of Democratic Services in conjunction with the Chief Transformation Officer. They may look at temporary solutions such as providing Authority owned ICT devices.

9)   A Paragraph 9.7 be added to the Policy as follows:

"9.7 Co-opted Members in receipt of the Telephone element of the Co-opted Member Broadband and Telephone Allowance must allow for their telephone number to be published on the Authority's website and promoted as necessary save in exceptional circumstances".

Report Author:	Huw Evans
Finance Officer:	Ben Smith
Legal Officer:	Tracey Meredith
Access to Services Officer:	Catherine Window

1. **Introduction**

1.1 The "Councillors' Broadband and Telephone, ICT and Mobile Phone Allowances - May 2017 & Beyond" Policy was adopted by Cabinet on 15 December 2015 following recommendations from the Democratic Services Committee held on 18 October 2016 and Council held on 24 November 2016.

1.2 The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) has determined that each Authority must ensure that all Councillors and Co-opted Members should be provided with adequate telephone, email and internet facilities. The Authority complies with the adoption of the "Councillors' Broadband and Telephone, ICT and Mobile Phone Allowances - May 2017 & Beyond" Policy.

1.3 This Authority has adopted a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) ethos which allows Councillors and Co-opted Members to use the appropriate allowance to purchase the equipment that they require to carry out their roles.

1.4 Details of the latest IRPW Annual Report and other information related to the IRPW may be viewed on their website.
https://gov.wales/irpwsub/home/publication-reports/?lang=en

2. **Review of the "Councillors' Broadband and Telephone, ICT and Mobile Phone Allowances - May 2017 & Beyond" Policy**

2.1 The current Policy which is outlined in **Appendix A** has been in place since May 2017 and there is a need to carry out a review to address some minor issues that have come to light during that time.

2.2 The Councillors' Broadband and Telephone, ICT and Mobile Phone Allowances - May 2017 & Beyond Policy contains details of the following allowances:

> Councillors' ICT Allowance;
> Councillors' Broadband and Telephone Allowance;
> Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance;
> Co-opted Member ICT Allowance;
> Co-opted Member Broadband and Telephone Allowance.

Name of Policy

2.3 The Policy attempts to encompass the titles each of the allowances into its name; however this has led to a Policy name that is far too long and confusing. As such, it is suggested that the Policy be renamed the "Councillors Information, Communication & Technology (ICT) Allowances - May 2017 & Beyond Policy" or "Councillors ICT Allowances – May 2017 & Beyond Policy" for short.

Councillors' ICT Allowance

2.4   Paragraph 5.3 of the Policy sets out an extract of the Councillors' ICT Allowance.

5.3   The Councillors' ICT Allowance is as follows:

In the Year immediately following the election of the Councillor	*£1,008*
Each Year Thereafter (Councillor may take this in advance from Year 2, i.e. £800 (£200 x 4 year Remaining Term of Office). The Authority will not pay any additional monies until following next Local Government Election (Currently scheduled for May 2022)	*£200 p.a. (£800) over the term.*

2.5   A number of Councillors, have sought clarity from the Head of Democratic Services relating to whether the £1,008 had to be spent in the year immediately following their election. This question mainly stems from the fact that many people may have adequate ICT at that time and do not need to spend at that moment in time; however over the five year term of Office, they may need to access it.

2.6   It is therefore suggested to add the following note to Paragraph 5.3 of the Policy:

Note: *1)   The Councillors' ICT Allowance over a 5 year period is £1,808 in total. This amount may be spent at any time during the 5 year term provided the claims are made using the Councillors / Co-opted Members ICT Allowance Claim Form and with relevant receipts;* *2)   Any spend exceeding £200 in the final year of the Term of Office must be approved in advance by the Head of Democratic Services in conjunction with the Chief Transformation Officer. They may look at temporary solutions such as providing Authority owned ICT devices.*

Councillors' Broadband and Telephone Allowance

2.7   Paragraph 6.1 of the Policy sets out an extract of the Councillors' Broadband and Telephone Allowance.

6.1   The Authority currently pays a monthly Broadband and Telephone Allowance to all Councillors providing:

a)   Councillors produce proof on an annual basis of their Broadband and Telephone connection at their home;

b)   Councillors are not in receipt of a payment for Broadband and Telephone at their home from a third party due to their employment or other election.

2.8   It is proposed that a third condition be added as follows:

"c)   Councillors in receipt of the Telephone element of the Councillors' Broadband and Telephone Allowance must allow for their telephone number to be published on the Authority's website and promoted as necessary save in exceptional circumstances".

2.9   Paragraph 6.4 of the Policy sets out an extract of the Councillors' Broadband and Telephone Allowance.

6.4   The Councillors' Broadband and Telephone Allowance shall:

a)   Only be paid once per Councillor household (i.e. if there are 2 or more Councillors living at the address then only one person shall receive the payment);

b)   Not be paid to a Councillor who does not have Broadband at their home address. If a Councillor does not have Broadband at home then they shall be paid £10 per month towards their Council related telephone calls.

2.10   Paragraph 6.4 a) of the Policy prevents more than one payment being made if there are 2 or more Councillors living at the same address. However, some Councillors may choose to have a mobile data package on their device rather than having a dedicated broadband package at their home address. This means that in a household of 2 or more Councillors, only one Councillor would have an allowance towards broadband.

2.11   The digital era has led to people including Councillors working in different ways to address their various requirements. Some people choose to have a broadband connection at home, others choose to have access to the internet via 3G or 4G on their mobile device and others utilise a data dongle. No doubt other methods are or will become available over the coming years.

2.12   Should the Committee recommends that an additional Broadband / Data Allowance payment be made to those additional Councillors in the same household, it would currently cost £15 per month per Councillor or £180 per Councillor per annum. There are 3 Councillors in this situation, so the current maximum additional cost to the Authority would be £540 per annum. Clearly, this could increase or decrease depending on circumstances changing.

2.13   Consideration could be given to limiting one broadband line to a household; however other data connections could be paid as outlined above.

2.14   The views of the Committee are sought regarding whether the Policy should be amended.

2.15   It is proposed that the "Broadband and Telephone Allowance" be renamed the "Data and Telephone Allowance" in order to clarify that the allowance is payable to all ow Councillors to access the Internet, emails etc. via whichever data platform they so choose.

Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance

2.16   Paragraph 7.1 of the Policy sets out an extract of the Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance.

7.1   The Authority currently pays a monthly Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance to qualifying Councillors in order to supplement their mobile phone bills due their increased use for Council business providing:

a)   Councillors produce proof on an annual basis of their Mobile Phone contract.

2.17   Paragraph 7.5 is almost a complete replica of Paragraph 7.1, it is therefore proposed that:

2.17.1 Paragraph 7.5 of the Policy be deleted and the section renumbered accordingly;

2.17.2 Paragraph 7.1 be amended as follows with an additional second condition also being added:

"7.1   The Authority currently pays a monthly Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance to qualifying Councillors in order to supplement their mobile phone bills due their increased use for Council business providing:

a)   Councillors produce proof on an annual basis of their Mobile Phone contract to the Cabinet Office / Democratic Services Team.

b)   Councillors in receipt of the Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance must allow for their mobile telephone number to be published on the Authority's website and promoted as necessary save in exceptional circumstances".

Payments to Statutory Co-opted Members

2.18   Paragraph 9.4 of the Policy sets out an extract of the Payments to Statutory Co-opted Members.

*9.4   The **Co-opted Member ICT Allowance** would be:*

In the Year immediately following the appointment of the Co-opted Member	*£201.60*
Each Year Thereafter (Co-opted Member may take this in advance from Year 2, i.e. £240 or £160 (£40 x 6 year / £40 x 4 year Remaining Term of Office).	*£40 p.a. (£240 or £160) over the term.*

2.19   In line with Paragraph 2.5 of the report above, it is proposed to add the following note to Paragraph 9.4 of the Policy:

> ***Note:***
> *1)   The Co-opted Members ICT Allowance over a 4 and year period is £361.60 and £441.60 in total respectively. This amount may be spent at any time during the 4-6 year term provided the claims are made using the Councillors / Co-opted Members ICT Allowance Claim Form and with relevant receipts;*
> *2)   Any spend exceeding £40 in the final year of the Term of Office must be approved in advance by the Head of Democratic Services in conjunction with the Chief Transformation Officer. They may look at temporary solutions such as providing Authority owned ICT devices.*

2.20   In line with Paragraph 2.8 of the report, it is proposed that a Paragraph 9.7 be added to the Policy as follows:

"9.7   Co-opted Members in receipt of the Telephone element of the Co-opted Member Broadband and Telephone Allowance must allow for their telephone number to be published on the Authority's website and promoted as necessary save in exceptional circumstances".

3.   Equality and Engagement Implications

3.1   There are no equality or engagement implications associated with this report.

4.   Financial Implications

4.1   If the Committee recommends that an additional Broadband / Data Allowance payment be made to those additional Councillors in the same household, it would currently cost £15 per month per Councillor or £180 per Councillor per annum. There are 3 Councillors in this situation, so the current maximum additional cost to the Authority would be £540 per annum. Clearly, this could increase or decrease depending on circumstances changing.

5.   Legal Implications

5.1   There are no specific legal implications associated with this report.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices:
Appendix A   Councillors' Broadband and Telephone, ICT and Mobile Phone Allowances - May 2017 & Beyond. Adopted by Cabinet on 15 December 2016

Report of the Head of Democratic Services & Chief Transformation Officer

Cabinet - 15 December 2016

**COUNCILLORS' BROADBAND AND TELEPHONE, ICT AND MOBILE PHONE
ALLOWANCES - MAY 2017 & BEYOND**

Purpose:	To review the "Councillors ICT - May 2012 and Beyond" policy thereby ensuring that Councillors are provided with an ICT provision suited to their needs and is compliant with the determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW).
Policy Framework:	None.
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that:

1) The current arrangements for Councillors to purchase their own ICT equipment be continued;
2) Access to Office 365 to enable cloud technology for more resilient, secure information sharing system, subject to successful pilot be noted;
3) The Councillors' ICT Allowance as outlined within the report be noted;
4) The Councillors' Broadband and Telephone Allowance as outlined within the report be noted;
5) The Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance as outlined within the report be noted;
6) The section relating to Councillors' Self Service be noted.
7) The Co-opted Member ICT Allowance and the Co-opted Member Broadband and Telephone Allowance be adopted;
8) Council's decision to ensure that all Scrutiny agendas, reports etc. utilise the Modern.gov Software by May 2017 be noted.

Report Author:	Huw Evans & Jo Harley
Finance Officer:	Carl Billingsley
Legal Officer:	Tracey Meredith
Access to Services Officer:	Phil Couch

1. **Introduction**

1.1 As part of the role of Councillors, Broadband, ICT and Voice Communications equipment and systems are essential in enabling that their responsibilities are delivered effectively and securely.

1.2 The current "Councillors ICT - May 2012 and Beyond" policy arrangements have been reviewed prior to the Local Government Elections scheduled for May 2017.

1.3 The review allows for new technologies to be made available and to align Councillors role to the new Digital strategy of the Authority. Councillors will be leading the way in the Authority wide rollout of a new Digital culture ambition aiming to make Swansea a lead Authority in the UK.

1.4 This report also seeks to review the Councillors' Broadband and Telephone Allowance and the Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance.

1.5 This approach links with the determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) by which the Authority is bound. Details of the latest IRPW Annual Report and other information may be viewed on their website. http://gov.wales/irpwsub/home/publication/?lang=en

1.5 The Democratic Services Committee considered the "Councillors' Broadband and Telephone, ICT and Mobile Phone Allowances - May 2017 & Beyond" report on 18 October 2016. The Committee made a number of minor amendments and recommended the report to Council.

1.6 Council at its meeting on 24 November 2016 also considered the report and made a number of minor amendments. Council also recommended the report to Cabinet for adoption.

2. Supporting the Work of Local Authority Members – IRPW Determinations

2.1 Determinations 6 and 7 of the IRPW Annual Report of February 2016 state:

"Determination 6: The Panel has determined that each Authority, through its Democratic Services Committee, must ensure that all of its members are given as much support as is necessary to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively. All elected members should be provided with adequate telephone and email facilities and electronic access to appropriate information";

"Determination 7: The Panel has determined that such support should be without cost to the individual member. Deductions must not be made from members' salaries by the respective Authority as a contribution towards cost of support which the Authority has decided necessary for the effectiveness and / or efficiency of members."

2.2 The determinations above apply to Councillors, the Statutory Co-opted Members. The IROW have indicated that the Community / Town Council Representative on the Standards Committee is to be treated as a Co-opted Member for this purpose.

2.3 The Authority has 9 Statutory Co-opted Members and 1 Community / Town Council Representative of the Standards Committee as follows:

➢ Chair of Audit Committee
➢ Chair of Standards Committee
➢ Ordinary Members of the Standards Committee **x 4**;
➢ Ordinary Members of Scrutiny Programme Committee **x 4** (3 Vacancies);
➢ Community / Town Councillor Representative of Standards Committee.

3. Current ICT Arrangements

3.1 Currently the Authority provides each Councillor with an ICT Allowance in order to enable them to fulfil their duties. The ICT Allowance allows Councillors to purchase their own equipment. The ICT Allowance should be used to purchase items such as desktop or laptop PC, Tablet Computer, Printer and Software), ICT Peripherals (such as storage, backup facilities, printer paper and ink) and ICT Support to Councillors".

3.2 This current arrangement allows the flexibility that Councillors requested prior to the Local Government Elections in May 2012. It effectively provides bring your own device (BYOD) technology to Councillors, which was an innovative decision 4 years ago. Councillors are able to purchase which ever device they find beneficial for their work; however they should be mindful that it is compatible with Microsoft Office

3.3 The Authority provides the technology for the Councillors to use to access their emails and files. The options enabled are CITRIX for files and emails and webmail for emails. Due to the decision to enable BYOD also required a separate WIFI connection to be installed to access these systems from within the Authority's main buildings.

4. Consultation Process for Review of Councillors' ICT Arrangements

4.1 In order to ensure that all Councillors views were considered as part of the review of the Councillors ICT - May 2012 and Beyond policy, the Democratic Services Committee discussed the issue and instructed the Head of Democratic Services and Chief Transformation Officer to liaise directly with the Political Groups on the Council. During September 2016, meetings took place with the Labour and Liberal Democrat Political Groups and discussions with the Independent and Conservative Political Group Leaders regarding the ICT requirements of Councillors.

4.2 Councillors were briefed on how the new Digital Strategy would provide Councillors with increased functionality taking advantage of new cloud technology. This would enable secure information sharing opportunities as part of the increased partnership working. The Digital Strategy is putting in place new infrastructure to support the principals of self service and mobile working.

4.3   Councillors have agreed that the current flexible arrangement, of purchasing their own equipment, is the preferred option post May 2017 election. The principle of Councillors being able to use the equipment for their personal use, without the restrictions that a corporate device would impose, is also welcomed.

4.4   Councillors referred to the recognised limitations of CITRIX and Webmail and these will be addressed through a pilot of Office 365 which is cloud technology. This pilot is currently being progressed in the Information and Business Change Section. It is proposed that this is rolled out to a pilot group of Councillors from January 2017.

4.5   Office 365 has many benefits as it is a web-based version of Microsoft Office which will provide increased resilience and shared service options for partnership. Benefits to using Office 365?

   a)   Anytime, Anywhere Access – Email, important documents, contact and calendar on nearly any device from almost anywhere;
   b)   Easy to Use – it works seamlessly with the programs a lot of people know and use most, including Outlook, Word, Excel and PowerPoint;
   c)   Ability to work either online or offline – Office 365 provides users with the ability to work online or offline via office desktop applications on your PC.

4.6   Another issue raised by Councillors was the perceived lack of support from the Authority in relation to the devices that Councillors themselves purchased. Councillors were reminded that they should use an element of their Councillors' ICT Allowance to fund such support from a Third Party provider. This will enable Councillors to receive the relevant technical support for the device(s) they purchased. Guidelines are provided and will be updated to assist technical support arrangements in the future.

5.   Councillors' ICT Allowance

5.1   The Authority currently pays a Councillors' ICT Allowance to all Councillors providing:

   a)   Councillors produce a receipt proving their purchase of relevant ICT items. Relevant ICT items being desktop or laptop PC, Tablet Computer, Printer and Software, ICT Peripherals (such as storage, backup facilities, printer paper and ink) and ICT Support to Councillors.

5.2   The Councillors' ICT Allowance shall be subject to Tax and National Insurance deductions. **Appendix 1** shows the Councillors' ICT Allowance Claim Form.

5.3   The Councillors' ICT Allowance is as follows:

In the Year immediately following the election of the Councillor	£1,008
Each Year Thereafter (Councillor may take this in advance from Year 2, i.e. £800 (£200 x 4 year Remaining Term of Office). The Authority will not pay any additional monies until following next Local Government Election (Currently scheduled for May 2022)	£200 p.a. (£800) over the term.

5.4   The Authority recommends that an element of the Councillors' ICT Allowance be used to purchase an ICT support service. **ICT Support is defined as:** Either an ad-hoc or fixed contract with a third party (Not the Authority) aimed at providing ICT support should any element of your ICT equipment fail.

5.5   The Authority will only provide Councillors ICT Support for issues directly linked to the Authorities systems, such as Password Reset, Access to Citrix and Oracle. The Authority will also provide general guidelines should the issue relate to an issue with the Councillors device, in order to aid them when having to contact an external ICT Support supplier.

5.6   The software package used by the City and County of Swansea is Microsoft Office. The Authority therefore recommends that Councillors ensure that any device that they purchase is compatible with Microsoft Office. Without such software Councillors may not be able to open certain documents sent to them by the Authority and in turn the Authority may not be able to open documents which the Councillor sends them.

5.7   Should a Councillor cease to remain a Councillor the Councillors' ICT Allowance shall cease and any ICT Support contract taken out by the Councillor shall remain the sole responsibility of the Councillor as will any repayments. Please also refer to the section relating to **"What happens if a Councillor ceases to remain a Councillor?"**

6.   Councillors' Broadband and Telephone Allowance

6.1   The Authority currently pays a monthly Broadband and Telephone Allowance to all Councillors providing:

a)   Councillors produce proof on an annual basis of their Broadband and Telephone connection at their home;

b)   Councillors are not in receipt of a payment for Broadband and Telephone at their home from a third party such due to their employment or other election.

6.2   The Councillors' Broadband and Telephone Allowance shall be subject to Tax and National Insurance deductions.

6.3   The Councillors' Broadband and Telephone Allowance is currently set at £25 per Councillor per month. This is split as £15 Broadband and £10 Telephone. It is not proposed to amend the amount of this Allowance.

6.4   The Councillors' Broadband and Telephone Allowance shall:

b)   Only be paid once per Councillor household (i.e. if there are 2 or more Councillors living at the address then only one person shall receive the payment);

b)   Not be paid to a Councillor who does not have Broadband at their home address. If a Councillor does not have Broadband at home then they shall be paid £10 per month towards their Council related telephone calls.

6.5   Should a Councillor cease to remain a Councillor the Councillors' Broadband and Telephone Allowance shall cease and any Broadband / Telephone contract taken out by the Councillor shall remain the sole responsibility of the Councillor as will any repayments. Please also refer to the section relating to **"What happens if a Councillor ceases to remain a Councillor?"**

7.   Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance

7.1   The Authority currently pays a monthly Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance to qualifying Councillors in order to supplement their mobile phone bills due their increased use for Council business providing:

a)   Councillors produce proof on an annual basis of their Mobile Phone contract.

7.2   The Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance shall be subject to Tax and National Insurance deductions.

7.3   There are 12 Qualifying Councillors: Cabinet Members, Presiding Member and the Leader of the Largest Opposition Group. The Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance is currently set at £25 per Qualifying Councillor per month.

7.4   The Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance is payable from the date when the Councillor is appointed by Council / Leader of the Council to a Qualifying Councillor position.

7.5   The Mobile Phone Allowance will only be paid to those Qualifying Councillors that produce annual evidence of their Mobile Phone Account to the Cabinet Officer / Democratic Services Team.

7.6   Should a Councillor cease to remain a Qualifying Councillor (as defined above) the Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance shall cease and any Mobile Phone contract taken out by the Councillor shall remain the sole responsibility of the Councillor as will any repayments.

7.7 Should a Councillor cease to remain a Councillor the Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance shall cease and any Mobile Phone contract taken out by the Councillor shall remain the sole responsibility of the Councillor as will any repayments. Please also refer to the section relating to **"What happens if a Councillor ceases to remain a Councillor?"**

8. What happens if a Councillor ceases to remain a Councillor?

8.1 If a Councillor ceases to remain a Councillor for whatever reason during their term of office, the Authority will immediately cease payment of any Allowance that the Councillor had previously been entitled to in their role as a Councillor.

8.2 Any contract taken out by the Councillor during their period as a Councillor will be the sole responsibility of that individual. The Authority will not make any payments towards the remaining period of the contract(s).

8.3 Any ICT equipment and ICT support purchased during a Councillors time as a Councillor shall automatically become the property of that Councillor. The Authority shall have no legal claim to it.

8.4 Should the Councillor cease to be a Councillor within the first 12 months of being elected the Councillor must repay the balance of the £1,008 on a complete month pro rata basis. This paragraph is waived should a Councillor die during their term of Office.

9. Payments to Statutory Co-opted Members

9.1 As Statutory Co-opted Members do not have the same time commitment of a Councillor, it is proposed that the ICT Allowance and Broadband and Telephone Allowance for a Co-opted Member be set at 20% of that of a Councillor.

9.2 The Councillor conditions relating to cessation of role be applied to Co-opted Members, so that they would also have to repay on a pro rata basis their ICT Allowance / Broadband and Telephone Allowance should they stand down prior to the end of their term of office.

9.3 The payments referred to above are not automatic payments and must be claimed by using the appropriate ICT Claim Form and / or by providing the annual bill as proof.

9.4 The **Co-opted Member ICT Allowance** would be:

In the Year immediately following the appointment of the Co-opted Member	£201.60
Each Year Thereafter (Co-opted Member may take this in advance from Year 2, i.e. £240 or £160 (£40 x 6 year / £40 x 4 year Remaining Term of Office).	£40 p.a. (£240 or £160) over the term.

9.5 As the Co-opted Members are already in place, it is proposed that the ICT Allowance Payments commence following the Annual Meeting of Council in May 2017 and then align with the actual appointment dates in the future.

9.6 The **Co-opted Member Broadband and Telephone Allowance** be set at £5 per Co-opted Member per month. This is split as £3 Broadband and £2 Telephone.

10. Data Protection Act / Security Advice (Anti-Virus, Anti-Spam, Firewall and Encryption)

10.1 Councillors are likely to handle personal information about individuals; as such they have a number of legal obligations to protect that information under the Data Protection Act 1998. Should a Councillor fail to comply with this Act then they would be liable to a fine of up to £5,000. The Authority pays the fee for each Councillor to be a registered Data Controller.

10.2 The Authority strongly advises that Councillors install Anti-Virus, Anti-Spam and Encryption software on any PC, Laptop, Tablet, Mobile Phone etc. used for Councillor Business. The use of a personal Firewall should also be considered. For advice in this area, Councillors should take appropriate security advice from their external ICT Support provider.

11. Claiming of Allowances and Providing Receipts / Proof of Purchase

11.1 **Claiming the Councillors' / Co-opted Members Broadband and Telephone Allowance.** Councillors / Co-opted Members must produce proof of Broadband and Telephone connection at their home on an annual basis in order to receive this monthly allowance. Proof shall be required during May / June each year and should be given to the Cabinet Office / Democratic Services Team as appropriate.

10.2 **Claiming the Councillors' Mobile Phone Allowance.** Councillors must produce proof of their Mobile Phone Contract on an annual basis in order to receive this monthly allowance. Proof shall be required during May / June each year and should be given to the Cabinet Office / Democratic Services Team as appropriate.

10.3 Failure to provide proof of a Broadband / Telephone / Mobile Phone contract during May / June each year will result in payments being stopped until proof is provided. The Authority shall not backdate any payments beyond 3 months.

10.4 **Claiming the Councillors' / Co-opted Members ICT Allowance.** Councillors / Co-opted Members should purchase the ICT equipment they require and complete the Councillors' / Co-opted Members ICT Allowance Claim Form as shown in **Appendix 1**. The Claim Form should be returned to the Cabinet Office / Democratic Services Team as appropriate.

11.   Councillors Self Service

11.1   The Democratic Services Committee at its meeting on 28 June 2016 received and noted an information report reminding Councillors of the Authorities "Sustainable Swansea - Fit for the Future" programme.

11.2   The objectives of Sustainable Swansea - Fit for the Future are:

- ➢   To transform services;
- ➢   To deliver better outcomes for residents;
- ➢   To achieve financial sustainability.

11.3   In order to achieve objectives, Councillors will need to play their role in the change agenda and embrace Oracle. Oracle is the Authority's integrated HR, payroll, finance, procurement stores and job costing system. It is used across the Authority in every Service Unit.

11.4   Councillor Self Service will allow Councillors to view, amend and apply for things via Oracle including:

- ➢   Payslips, P60's and P11d's;
- ➢   Changes to personal details (address, bank etc.);
- ➢   Car Parking Permits;
- ➢   Mileage and Expenses Claims.

11.5   By encouraging Councillors to use Oracle Self Service, it will reduce printing costs, save administration time and costs. All of which will assist the Authority in managing its financial deficit. Oracle Self Service will also allow Councillors to update their information in real time.

11.6   With immediate effect, no new Councillor shall receive a paper payslip and will be required to use the Self Service on Oracle. All current Councillors will be encouraged to shift to the Self Service system; however it will be compulsory from the Annual Meeting of Council in May 2017.

11.7   The shift to Oracle Self Service Mileage and Expenses Claims will also commence in May 2017; however a number of Councillors will be invited to start using the system sooner, so that the process can be trialled.

11.8   Training will be provided to all Councillors in order to manage this process of change.   User Guides are available on the Authority's StaffNet site http://www.swansea.gov.uk/staffnet/mileageandexpenses

11.9   Modern.gov is the Authority's software solution for meeting management including placing agendas, reports and minutes online. It is an integrated package which aims to simplify websites for Councillors, Officers and the public. All Scrutiny agendas, reports etc shall be placed on the Modern.gov software system from May 2017.

11.10 This approach compliments the Authority's Digital Strategy.

12.   Equality and Engagement Implications

12.1   An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening process took place prior to the consultation period. The outcome indicated that it was low priority and a full report was not required.

13.   Financial Implications

13.1   Each of the Allowances referred to in this report shall be subject to Tax and National Insurance deductions.

13.2   The proposals outlined in the report are contained within existing budgetary constraints.

14.   Legal Implications

14.1   The proposals identified are in accordance with relevant legislation.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices: Appendix 1 - Councillors' / Co-opted Members ICT Allowance Claim Form.

Background Papers: None.

Councillors / Co-opted Members ICT Allowance Claim Form

Name:	
Address:	
Post Code:	

Please provide details of ICT items or support purchased. In accordance with the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Councillors' / Co-opted Members ICT Allowance payments will only be made to Councillors following the completion of this form **together with the relevant receipt(s)**.

Date Purchased	Item / Service Purchased	Cost
	Total Amount Claimed	£

Note:
i) *I have incurred these costs to enable me to fulfil my duties as a Councillor / Co-opted Member in accordance with the IRPW.*
ii) *Councillors' ICT Allowance. Year of Election is £1,008. Remaining Term of Office is £200 p.a. x 4 years (£800). The sum of £800 may be taken as a lump sum from Year 2 providing a receipt is provided. The Authority will not pay any additional monies until the following Local Government Election.*
iii) *Co-opted Members' ICT Allowance. Year of Appointment is £201.60. Remaining Term of Office is £40 p.a. The per annum sum may be taken as a lump sum from Year 2 providing a receipt is provided. The Authority will not pay any additional monies until the following Local Government Election.*

Councillor Signature:		Date:	

For Office Use	Checked By:		Payroll No.:	

Report of the Head of Democratic Services

Democratic Services Committee – 31 July 2018

Social Media - A Guide for Members - WLGA First Draft

Purpose:	To seek comments & suggestions in relation to the WLGA's Draft "Social Media - A Guide for Members".
Policy Framework:	None.
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that:
1) The views of the Committee are sought.	
Report Author:	Huw Evans
Finance Officer:	Ben Smith
Legal Officer:	Tracey Meredith
Access to Services Officer:	Catherine Window

1. Introduction

1.1 The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) are currently seeking comments and suggestions in relation to their draft "Social Media - A Guide for Members" document.

1.2 The views of the Democratic Services Committee are sought. The Head of Democratic Services will then feedback to the WLGA.

2. Equality and Engagement Implications

2.1 There are no equality or engagement implications associated with this report.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 There are no specific legal implications associated with this report.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices: Appendix A - WLGA's Draft "Social Media - A Guide for Members"

Social Media

A Guide for Members

First Draft

Contact

Welsh Local Government Association

The WLGA's primary purposes are to promote a better local government, its reputation and to support authorities in the development of policies and priorities which will improve public service and democracy.

It represents the 22 local authorities in Wales with the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities as associate members.

Welsh Local Government Association
Local Government House
Drake Walk
Cardiff
CF10 4LG

Tel: 029 2046 8600
Fax: 029 2046 8601

www.wlga.gov.uk

Contact Sarah Titcombe – Policy and Improvement Officer for Democratic Services.
029 2046 8638 sarah.titcombe@wlga.gov.uk

Introduction

Social media is changing the world.

It is changing the way we communicate, the way we receive our news and, increasingly, the way we think about ourselves and others. Social media is transforming politics too; it makes politicians and public institutions more accessible, allows individuals to have their voices heard and helps share ideas or promote campaigns, potentially to millions, in an instant.

It is a powerful tool that can do much good but, in the wrong hands, can cause harm too – the growth of online abuse or trolling is a concern, as is the mounting evidence that organisations or even foreign agencies can exploit social media or use 'fake news' to influence public opinion or even affect democratic contests[1].

Social media's influence is growing, not only are the number of active users increasing but it is also being used more effectively as a medium to communicate, engage and mobilise.

Social media has therefore become a vital tool for councils and councillors to inform and engage with the communities they serve.

Many councillors already use social media and many more are thinking about using it. As a councillor, there are additional things to consider when using social media, including the code of conduct and managing expectations and workload.

This guidance offers advice for those councillors who are new to social media and some tips for those already using it. Social media is rapidly evolving, so this guidance offers a general overview, some key pointers and principles and references to step-by-step resources online.

1. What is social media?

Social media is vast blanket term applied to a range of online multimedia tools; in short, social media allows you to communicate, broadcast or publish to millions in an instant, usually for free and all from a small device in the palm of your hand.

Social media can be set up and accessed via your smartphone, PC, laptop, tablet or smart TV. Social media applications (apps) or platforms allow you to communicate (either with individuals, specific groups or everyone), share information, share photos, create, edit and share audio or videos and play games with others.

Councils now use social media as a matter of course to communicate and consult with their residents who now expect this to be another communication channel, especially for urgent information. Council Twitter feeds includes information on community events, school and

---

[1] [1] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-39830727 and https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-41355903

road closures, job vacancies, sporting events and consultations, as well as details and, occasionally, detailed accounts of council meetings, including links to webcasts. Council Scrutiny Committees may also be using social media to promote and consult on their activities and undertake service reviews, for example,
@Mon_CC_Scrutiny   @SwanseaScrutiny

Although there are some risks to using social media, which will be covered later in this guide, social media can be fun and innovative and can be used as an alternative method of communication and engagement. it can also break down barriers and stereotypes. Councils and other public bodies have used it for positive public relations, for example, it is worth looking at Swansea's @lovethelagoon or #FacesOfSwanseaCouncil2018, or Cardiff's #workingforyou, Torfaen's 'In the Depot' video on Youtube or councils asking the public to name snow ploughs - we have social media to thank for Boaty McBoatface!

Social media has a massive reach and some individuals (typically celebrities or national politicians) have many millions of followers. Social media is growing in usage too, an ONS survey in 2017[2] showed that 66% of people in the UK had used social media in the last 3 months. It's not just younger people who use social media, research by the Office of National statistics showed that that there is significant use across all age groups:

Percentage of individuals who had used social media in past 6 months (ONS 2017)

Age	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	All
%	96	88	83	68	51	27	66

According to Ofcom[3], in 2017, 74% of adults used a smartphone, 84% of Welsh households had access to the internet. Internet users in Wales spent an average of 21 hours online per week in 2016.

Facebook and Twitter are the most widely used social media platforms and therefore the most relevant to councillors; it is estimated that there are 17.1 million Twitter users in the UK[4] whilst Facebook suggests that there are 30 million UK users per day on mobiles alone[5] and globally over 2.20 billion monthly active Facebook users!

This guide will therefore focus on Facebook and Twitter for councillors, and will touch on others too.

Blogs

A blog (an abbreviation of "web-log") is essentially an online journal with your latest posts appearing first. It can be a journal of diary entries, thoughts or ideas or somewhere to publish fuller articles on issues. Anyone can add comments to your blog and you can use

---

[2]

(https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialme diausage/adhocs/007401socialnetworkingbyagegroup2011to2017)
[3] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0027/104985/cmr-2017-wales.pdf
[4] https://www.statista.com/statistics/271350/twitter-users-in-the-united-kingdom-uk/
[5]

the site to link or draw attention to other online comments or sources of information. Blogs are most effective when they are regularly maintained and updated.

> **KEEP AT IT...**As with all social media, if you start blogging, it's best to keep it up and keep it up-to-date; all it takes is for someone to find your last blog entry of some years ago and they can criticise you by saying 'you have nothing else to say' or 'you have no new ideas'. If you do stop blogging think about archiving the material or moving it over to a new social media platform.

Blogs tend to be included as part of an existing website or via Facebook, which means it's easier to promote and encourage broader feedback.

Some leaders produce blogs via their council websites, for example in Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf, whilst other councillors publish their own, for example here.

Twitter is technically a micro-blog. Twitter allows you to post information, news, photos or videos in messages that are known as **tweets**. Twitter enables you to **follow** people, organisations, news or information that you are interested in and post information and messages of your own. People or organisations in turn can follow you, so they can see all of your tweets; you can even adjust the settings to allow you to be alerted when someone you're particularly interested in tweets.

Tweets are each limited to 280 characters long (characters include letters, numbers, punctuation and spaces). Tweets are not a private means of communication and can be seen by anyone who is following you.

For example,

> **WLGA**
> @WelshLGA
>
> Replying to @WelshLGA
>
> #WLGAExecutiveBoard notes the remarkable resilience of the current system of local government in the face of huge cuts and austerity

You can **like** or **retweet** information and someone else's tweets that you would like to pass on to others. For example,

Conversations on the same theme on Twitter are called **threads**. You can search for Tweets on a subject that you are interested in by typing your subject into the search box.

Tweets on the same theme are drawn together using **hashtags.** People use the hashtag symbol (#) before a relevant keyword or phrase in their Tweet to categorise those Tweets and help them show more easily in a Twitter search. Clicking on a hash tagged word in any message shows you other Tweets that include that hashtag.

You can have a private conversation or create a group conversation with anyone who follows you by using the **Direct Message** option. Anyone you do not follow can also send you a Direct Message if you have opted to receive Direct Messages from anyone or you have previously sent that person a Direct Message.

You can **block** or **mute** accounts on Twitter. Once an account has been blocked, those accounts cannot follow you and you cannot follow them. However even those you have blocked can still access your account through a third party who follows you.

Here are some examples of councillors' Twitter accounts.
https://twitter.com/CraigDrosPlaid
@LeaderNewport
twitter.com/mndsc06
@PeterFox61
@EllenapGwynn

And some useful organisations
@WelshLGA
@LGAComms
@WelshGovernment
@WG_localgov@AssemblyWales
@BBCWalesNews

Warning

As a politician, others may consider your tweets 'fair game'. A good rule of thumb is not to commit anything to social media that could at some point be used against you. Even your retweets can be perceived as something you endorse or support.

As with emails, although Direct Messages are private and you may trust the recipients, they can become public if leaked!

All the details about how twitter works and how you can set up an account can be found here. https://help.twitter.com/en/create-twitter-account

Facebook is the most extensively used social network in the world. Essentially, it allows you to easily create your own webpage or an interactive newsletter about you, your life, your interests and friends.

Have a look at these councillors' pages
https://www.facebook.com/cllrneilprior/
www.facebook.com/dhanisha4ogmore/
https://www.facebook.com/CllrSDavies
https://denbighshirecouncilchairman.wordpress.com/

and these council pages
www.facebook.com/wrexhamcouncil/
www.facebook.com/IOACC/

To use Facebook, you'll need to create a profile - a **Timeline** where you might add a photo, describe yourself, what you do and your interests. You can also describe your **Status** which would update your friends about how you are feeling or what you are doing at any given time. You can update this as often as you like.

On Facebook, you can invite people to be your **Friends** and set different levels of access to your account, so some people can see all the information about you or you can make less detail available to others. You can also use Facebook to communicate with groups or individuals. People who find your page, comments or proposals of interest can **Like** you or your latest post, which encourages further use, and is a useful way of taking a straw poll of your ideas. People can also add a **Comment** on your post or **Share** your post on their own timelines.

You may wish to set up a Facebook page about your community, to promote events, announcements or your council activities; many councils and councillors do this and it can be a very effective method to engage and seek views from the community. You should be prepared to receive challenge and criticism however, as it is an open forum and not everyone will agree with your ideas or views; you can however set rules, moderate and edit other people's posts however if their language or content is offensive or inappropriate.

You can send private notes to any "friend" you're connected with on Facebook; they can only be seen by the person to whom they're sent; Facebook's **Messenger** app is increasingly popular. You can also '**Live Chat**' on Facebook. This is a real-time conversation with any of your Facebook friends who happen to be online and signed in at the same time as you are.

Crucially, Facebook lets each user control who can see their personal information and what they post on the network. You can set the level of privacy for different categories of your information and posts and the permission extended to different people who view your site. As a member you might want to differentiate between what you show your close friends and family and members of the public.

Find out more and join Facebook here

www.facebook.com

WhatsApp is a free messaging app which also allows you to have traditional 'phone conversations'. It is very popular as it allows you to set up groups of friends or colleagues to keep them updated on a particular theme. It may be a quick and easy way, for example, of keeping your political group up to date on key issues. You can download the app from various app stores or visit www.whatsapp.com

YouTube is a video sharing platform. Videos are easy to record via a smartphone and are more easily distributed via Twitter or Facebook, however, some people prefer to use YouTube and it is increasingly being used by councils to post information. An example from
Pembrokeshire https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAeI9sXMHHo
Cardiff https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4i7JfAMEnCE
Monmouthshire - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_mWif8jCMY
Conwy - https://www.youtube.com/user/ConwyWeb
Cardiff https://www.youtube.com/user/cardiffcouncil/featured
Gwynedd https://www.youtube.com/user/CyngorGwynedd
Powys https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCop_U-YVW7OB0jRIt3b8f1Q

2. Why Should You Use Social Media?

Social media will allow you to open new conversations with the people you represent, and the potential for councillors using social media is huge. Social media allows you to be innovative and responsive as well as providing links to useful sources of information or sign-posting to other organisations.

- Don't ignore social media – it's there and won't go away! People are already online and it's growing, and people increasingly expect their councillors to be contactable via social media. If you're not involved people may bypass you or may even 'talk about you' and you're missing out on a useful source of intelligence.
- It's a useful way of finding out what people are talking about locally, their concerns and interests.
- It's useful for finding out about breaking news, the latest research or publication or the latest policy announcements from political parties.
- It's a good way of making the electorate more aware of the work you do personally.
- It can help make you appear more human and down-to-earth! People often don't understand what councillors do and may have negative perceptions, but social media can give people a taste of your personal life and remind people that you are just like them, with similar interests – you do need to consider balance though and how much of your personal life you want in the public domain.
- It's an effective way of coordinating campaigns for example, mobilising support and interest and gathering followers, you can also allow campaign workers access to your Facebook account to post on your or your campaign's behalf to share the workload.
- Social media allows you to have a conversation with a range of people that you would never be able to physically meet and who do not traditionally seek out their local representatives.
- Social media allows for immediate communication. You can pass on information and receive opinions in minutes. You can forward information from other people equally quickly. "Going Viral" is not necessarily a bad thing, and refers to a mass spreading of a piece of information around the world – but be careful, only share information you are confident is correct, Fake News is damaging and there is the risk of defamation if you spread falsehoods.
- The local and sometimes national press will follow councillors on Twitter or Facebook. It's an instant 'press release' machine! Social media is a growing source for stories for news outlets as each tweet or comment is effectively a mini-press release. Journalists will know what you are talking about the minute you talk about it.
- Social media is mobile. You can take it around your community, on the train, to a coffee shop. You can upload pictures and videos, showing for example your role in local events, pictures of potential sites for development, new buildings, local eyesores - a picture tells a thousand words.
- It's free and you probably already have the equipment you need. All you need is time.
- You can receive immediate feedback on your ideas and manifesto to allow you to modify your proposals in line with local thinking.
- Above all, it can be a lot of fun!

What are the drawbacks?

- Having a social media presence means that people can contact you 24/7. This is great in terms of accessibility, but means that they may expect you to reply immediately. Technology and social media has raised expectations, people often expect a speedy response and resolution to their query; this expectation, coupled with the fact that social media shows how responsive you are, can create more pressure.
- Using social media can become addictive, many people find themselves answering messages late into the night because they just can't put it down.
- Similarly, too much weight can be given to what goes on in the 'Twittersphere'; sections of twitter are often described as 'echo chambers' – it may only be a couple of people with a limited number of followers with strong views on a subject who are 'bouncing' off each other – they may be in the minority and not be representative; take a step back, the rest of the community or the rest of society may be blissfully unaware or may not think in the same way!
- People can post false information, insults or messages that you would not want to be associated with on your social media platforms. These can be spread rapidly via social media.
- Some people say things via social media that they say to your face, it's an easy way of taking personal pot shots at councillors. People making these comments are often called Trolls and may not be interested in facts, just in attacking you.
- Councillors, and in particular women councillors, are increasingly the subject of online abuse, bullying and harassment on social media. The WLGA has produced a [separate guide](#) on how to deal with online abuse.

> **It's easier said than done, but try not to get too concerned about what's said online...**
> You are likely to receive criticism at some point and trolls may try to rile you, but often they will have few followers and their comments may not be seen by many people. Keep calm and the best advice is to ignore, often trolls will crawl back under their bridge...if it does get serious, you can report it.

Are you controlling your social media use or is it controlling you?

Recent research has recognised that some people feel out of control in their use of social media[6].

Ask yourself how comfortable you feel if you cannot access your social media accounts? It is important for councillors to bear in mind that even if the rest of the world seems to be online 24/7, you don't have to be. Being a councillor is a professional role and you can decide how available you want to make yourself. There are some common recommendations for managing your time in front of a screen and you may want to consider some of these:

- Establish a routine, check your messages at the same time every day rather than responding to the 'ping' of every new message arriving
- Looking at a screen can disrupt your sleep patterns, consider turning off all screens two hours before going to bed and make the bedroom a screen free zone
- When you are with your residents face to face, give them your undivided attention to help you focus on what's happening where you are and not appear rude.

---

[6] http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20180118-how-much-is-too-much-time-on-social-media

3. Getting Started

Choose your medium and sign up. Signing up is very straightforward and will take you less than five minutes! Facebook and Twitter are good places to start.

If you don't already have an account, ask a colleague, friend or family member for advice, ask them to show you how they use social media. You might want to begin with a trial personal account (rather than calling yourself "Councillor Jones") and experiment with family and friends. Make sure that you understand how people find you and who can access your material.

Remember:

On Facebook you can control who has access to different parts of your account. You can manage what the world sees and what your "friends" see.

On Twitter the whole world can see everything you Tweet. You can **'Protect my Tweets'**, which essentially makes your tweets private to only your current followers, but that defeats the object of using Twitter to engage more widely.

When you are ready to set up your final account, consider the identity you use. The name you give yourself online is important as it allows people to find you. Prefacing your Twitter account with Cllr lets people know exactly who you are and indicates that the Code of Conduct will apply.

Consider:

- Different councillors have different views, but you might want to consider setting up a separate personal and "councillor" account, at least at first - you can talk about the amazing food in the restaurant around the corner to your friends and followers in your informal account, and the plans for the new bypass to your friends and followers on your councillor account. Separate accounts can help you manage some of the online trolling that is likely to come your way as a councillor – it can be a way of keeping your home life and councillor life separate. However, many councillors think that some of their personal comments about food, places they've visited, football matches or TV helps break down perceptions of councillors and proves that they are normal like everyone else!

- Make it easy for people to find you online. Many people will start their search for the area that you represent, so make sure you mention your location frequently as that this will then be picked up by search engines. You will also want to make sure that your social media account details are on your business cards, posters and flyers.

- Increase your social media following by following other people, retweeting other people's tweets, liking tweets or posts or commenting on people's Facebook posts Find people on Twitter with links to your community, county or region or with similar interests by searching using the 'hashtag' (#) symbol to prefix your search term for example #llandrindod, #powys #midwales

- Be disciplined about making time available to write new content and answer your "friends" and "followers" at a regular time each week to update your Facebook status and throughout the day to check Twitter. If you use your mobile phone, you can set notifications to alert you each time you are mentioned in a tweet.

- If you do not want to be available every hour of the day or night, tell people when your account will be checked, for example you might add "available 9.00-7.00 weekdays" on your profile.

- Decide on what you are going to talk about and how. This could be

  o Weekly updates of your own activities as a councillor - don't forget your pictures! This works better on Facebook as you can include more detail. Remember Twitter is only 280 characters and tends to me more instant and timely.
  o Regular updates on council policies and actions of interest to your community.
  o Links and re-tweets of other relevant national activities.
  o Issues on which you would like feedback.
  o Notice of events and public meetings.

- using social media is all about two-way communication, it's good for providing information to your community or flagging up press statements, but it's better as a tool to get useful feedback. You will get feedback and you should expect some people to challenge your ideas or enter into a debate with you online. This is part and parcel of social media.

- Keep your communications clear, positive, polite and professional. Plain language helps. Many people use abbreviations on Twitter – you'll pick these up as you go along!

- On Facebook, you will need to monitor and, if necessary, censor the contributions that other people make to your site; delete them if they do not match your required standards of behaviour or language. Defamatory and offensive language could be attributed to the publisher as well as the original author and could incur financial liability. It is up to you to decide if you want to remove posts that disagree with your political position, however if you do remove them you may be accused or censoring contributions on political grounds.

- Bear in mind that constituents may find party political point scoring tedious and prefer to hear information about what you are achieving.

- If you don't have anything to say…don't say anything. Even though it's tempting to let your followers know how busy you are they will soon become bored with constant updates on your day without some relevant or interesting information.

Monitoring social media

It can be difficult to keep on top of what's happening online; people are posting and tweeting all the time and if you are following many people or organisations, social media can become 'noisy' and you could miss things of interest or significance.

A quick way to check up on things on Twitter is to visit the Twitter page of some of your favourite people, organisations or news outlets to see what they've been saying. You could also search for a particular theme or issue with a hashtag#.

If you're keen to find out what people are saying about you, your local area or local council for example, there are social media management applications that you can use such as Hootsuite or Buffer. These are simple to set up and use and can allow you to see how often people read or retweet your tweets. It also allows you schedule tweets for example, to send a pre-prepared tweet at a certain time of day.

The Welsh Language

You can use social media in the language of your choice; you do not have to translate your personal Tweets or Facebook accounts.

Councils' social media streams might however be available either separately in Welsh and English or bilingually. The Welsh Language Commissioner feels that there is no need for social media streams to be bilingual as the two separate streams will be accessed by, and will be sufficient for different communities. [7] Make sure that you are aware of your Council's rules on the use of the Welsh language set out in your Welsh Language Scheme.

---

[7]http://www.comisiynyddygymraeg.cymru/hybu/SiteCollectionDocuments/Technoleg%2c%20Gwefannau%20a%20Meddalwedd%20-%20Technology%2c%20Websites%20and%20Software.pdf

4. Staying safe and dealing with trolls

Some form of online disagreement and criticism is inevitable and, if you're not online, you or your policies may already be subject to debate without you. Disagreement and challenge is a key feature of democratic debate, however, online it can easily spill over into abuse or harassment.

You will therefore need to prepare yourself for some uncomfortable reading, which may cause some upset. You cannot prevent online abuse, but you can take control of how and whether you respond and, if it becomes serious, you can report it.

The WLGA has produced a separate guidance on dealing with online abuse which you may find useful. You can read it [here](#).

Some advice

Take Control

Decide for yourself and make it clear on your homepage what you expect from people who are engaging with you on Social Media. You might say, for example, that whilst you welcome an open and frank exchange of views any inappropriate comments will be removed and that any comment which is libellous or threatening or becomes harassment will be reported.

Remember that you don't have to put up with abuse or harassment just because you are a political figure

Be prepared to 'Mute' or 'Block' or 'Unfriend' abusive users from your account or ask them to remove comments. If a comment crosses the line into abuse or harassment you can report this to Facebook or Twitter or even the police.

Respond or ignore?

When faced with an abusive comment give yourself some time to decide whether to respond or ignore it. Trolls often have few followers or few followers of significance – if you reply it can lead to a tit for tat argument fuelling further confrontation and provides the troll with the "oxygen of publicity" or the satisfaction of seeing you riled. Chances are you'll have far more followers than the troll, so if you reply, all of your followers will be aware of the troll's original tweet. Although ignoring the comment can lead to short term allegations of dodging an issue but may succeed in the long term.

> **Don't feed the troll!**

Stay calm and polite

Not every criticism is from a Troll – sometimes a frustrated member of the public may be critical or cross with you initially on social media, particularly if they are trying to resolve a council service issue. If you respond constructively, their tone will change and they may even apologise or show you appreciation online.

Bear in mind that for every Troll there will be many more legitimate and sensible followers. Think of them when you respond. One approach is to respond with facts only or to refer the troll to a longer factual statement about the situation or a set of "frequently asked questions" that you can post to pre-empt queries. You might want to invite the troll to a public meeting. They may find it harder to be abusive in public. You may also want to remind the Troll that you are more than happy to have a political debate in your role as a councillor but that personal comments about you or your family are unacceptable.

The Facebook **and** Twitter Help Pages **have full details about how to block users and how to report abuse**

A Criminal Offence?

If someone sends threatening, abusive or offensive messages they may be committing an offence. If you receive a message which you consider falls into this category, do not respond to it and check out the guidance provided by the police and CFPS and if appropriate report it.

https://www.askthe.police.uk/content/Q770.htm

http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/a_to_c/communications_sent_via_social_media/

Remember, the WLGA has produced a separate guide **on** **Dealing with Online Abuse**

5. Support from the Council

Councillors are generally provided with the ICT equipment that they need to do their job. The Independent Remuneration Panel expects that this will include equipment, support and training.

It is also reasonable to expect that you should also have access to social media sites via council ICT equipment to enable you to carry out your councillor role more effectively. You do not need the council to set you up with a personal social media account but you should take advantage of any training or guidance provided to help you use it properly.

Most councils have a social media policy. You will need to abide by this and any social media protocols that may have been agreed when using your "councillor" account.

It's worth remembering that the council is responsible for any information provided on its website and is subject to legal responsibilities. **You** are personally responsible for the material that you broadcast via your own social media accounts or websites – but more of this later.

Advice will be available to you from a number of council officers. The Monitoring Officer, Head of Democratic Services, the Communications Team and the ICT Manager are likely to have useful advice.

6. Social Media and Council Meetings

Your council's Social Media policy and/or Council Constitution will provide you with guidance about if and when you can use social media during council meetings. Other than what your constitution or social media policy says, there is no legal reason why you shouldn't use social media during meetings. However, some common sense does need to apply.

- Tweeting on meeting progress and receiving comments from the community can be helpful for transparency and engagement BUT excessive use of Twitter may give people the impression that you are not concentrating on the business in hand or are even relying on guidance from outside the meeting. For that reason, it is probably sensible not to use Twitter during a planning or licensing debate. Committee chairs may want to decide how to address this in their meetings and you should abide by the rules set out in your constitution.

- Many politicians tweet their contributions or questions to meetings or debates to keep their followers informed of how they're representing their communities' interests. Remember, you may not need to tweet about the detail of a meeting if the meeting is being webcast. Your council may have official" twitter feeds for live on-line conversations to run alongside the meeting webcast.

- If your council webcasts your meetings, this provides a useful way of the public viewing what is happening at first hand and ensures that any video recordings are accurate. Many councils do not allow individuals to film meetings informally, whether this is done by councillors or the public, and is usually covered by the Constitution. It may provide a distraction to the proceedings and, if an edited version of events appears on You Tube it might create a false impression.

- Remember that you should not tweet or communicate in any way the content of exempt or confidential business dealt with by local authorities in closed session such as when making formal appointments.

8. Golden rules

- Think before you tweet or post on Facebook. Do not say anything, post views or opinions that you would not be prepared to:

  - Discuss face to face with the person you are speaking about.
  - Write on a placard and carry down your high street and discuss and defend with anyone who sees it.
  - Be prepared to have minuted in a public meeting – remember, Twitter or Facebook effectively publicly minutes everything for you as you go along!

- Remember that once you have said something it may be seen by millions - friends, supporters, political opponents and the press and could be re-tweeted around the world in minutes.

- Keep your messages professional, polite and positive.

- Remember to try to keep tweets and texts separate – many people tweet comments that they would have texted to someone privately before the advent of social media; this may be about meeting up later (do you want all your followers knowing your plans and gate-crashing your lunch!?) through to 'in' jokes or banter that could be misinterpreted.

> **Warning**
> Don't discuss casework on social media or encourage people to contact you about issues that might be personal to them. Encourage them to use more secure channels.

- Exercise discretion when choosing who to follow on Twitter or 'befriend' on Facebook, for example, some council employees might find it a bit uncomfortable or inappropriate to have a councillor hanging on their every word. If you follow or are Facebook "friends" with council employees, contractors who have been procured to provide services to the council, a company or member of the public making a planning application or pressure groups, this might be construed as having a close personal association with them and therefore a personal interest.

- If you make a mistake admit it. Mistakes happen so don't try to cover it up as there will always be a record of what you've said.

- Don't tweet or post on Facebook when you are "tired or emotional"! It's probably sensible to turn off your phone at any time when you think your judgement may be impaired. Even if you exercise social media control, other people will still have their smart phones, so may post a photo or video of you 'enjoying yourself'; you need to let your hair down, but it's just one extra thing to consider as a councillor in the age of social media.

- As with your own leaflets or newsletters, ask permission before taking a picture that you intend to use. NEVER take photos of children without the express permission of their parents based on an understanding of what you intend to

use the picture for. Your council will have a policy on taking pictures of children, take advice on this before taking or using pictures.

- Do not allow anyone else access to your social media accounts. Protect your passwords and use robust, unique passwords and change them regularly especially if you use a public or shared computer.

- Just like email, you can get spam in social media! Be wary about direct messages via Twitter, even from people you know, with messages such as 'Hi, have you seen this photo of you on Twitter?' Delete these before opening, as the spam could then be sent to all of the people you are following…

9. Keep on the right side of the law…

Councillors new to social media tend to be concerned about the legal implications. It is an important consideration, and some councillors and other politicians have fallen foul of the law, but with careful use and following some ground-rules you will be fine!

The style of communication employed in the social media environment tends to be fast and informal. Messages can appear lightweight and transitory.

Whenever you post something on social media, it becomes a publication, you have effectively made a broadcast. As it is now in the public domain, it is subject to both the **Code of Conduct** and to various **laws.**

Code of Conduct

If you conduct yourself on twitter or Facebook as you would in person on the street or in your leaflets, then you will be fine.

Remember that according to guidance from the Ombudsman, the Code of Conduct applies to you whenever you are "Conducting the business of your authority, acting, claiming to act or give the impression you are acting in your official capacity as a member or representative of your authority" Also the Code applies if you "Conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or your authority into disrepute" [8]

If you can be identified as a councillor when you are using social media, either by your account name or how you describe yourself or by what you comment upon and how you comment, the requirements of the Code of Conduct apply. If you say something that could be regarded as bringing your office or authority into disrepute the Code applies even if you are not apparently acting in your official capacity or do not identify yourself as a member.

Remember that the Ombudsman's guidance states that "Making unfair or inaccurate criticism of your authority in a public arena might well be regarded as bringing your authority into disrepute"

---

[8] https://www.ombudsman.wales/guidance-policies/

In the same way that you are required to act in council meetings or in your communities you should:

- **Show respect for others** - do not use social media to be rude or disrespectful

- **Not disclose confidential information about people or the council**

- **Not bully or intimidate others** - repeated negative comments about or to individuals could be interpreted as bullying or intimidation

- **Not try to secure a benefit for yourself or a disadvantage for others**

- **Abide by the laws of equality** - do not publish anything that might be seen as racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic or anti faith. Even as a joke or "tongue in cheek"

Predetermination

As a councillor, you are aware that when you act in a quasi-judicial capacity, for example on a planning or licensing committee, you should not make up your mind about an issue that is to be formally decided upon before you had heard all the relevant information. You are allowed to be predisposed to a particular view but not to have gone so far as to have predetermined your position.

It is important to remember therefore that anything relevant you might have said about particular issues on social media could be used as evidence of your having made up your mind in advance of hearing all the relevant information.

DON'T BECOME A TROLL YOURSELF!

Social media is a great tool for councillors to challenge and scrutinise, but always think about what you are saying, how you are saying it, how often and about whom. If you are perceived to be too aggressive or too confrontational or too frequent, it could begin to damage your reputation, undermine your relationship with colleagues or you could risk breaching the code of conduct in terms of bullying, intimidation or lack of respect for others.

It's therefore not appropriate for you to use social media to criticise your council's officers, who often will not be in a position to defend or respond publicly.

Many councils have apps or member referral services; it is often best to use these mechanisms to request council services or report local concerns as you are likely to receive a resolution to your request.

Criminal Offences

Don't panic! These generally apply to you already in your conduct as a councillor, but it is worth considering them as they apply to social media:

Harassment - It is a criminal offence to repeatedly pursue a campaign against someone where this is likely to cause alarm, harassment nuisance or distress.

Data Protection and the General Data Protection Regulation. - It is illegal to publish personal data about individuals unless they have given you their consent. This might apply to your constituents or service users. As a councillor you are a data controller in your own right and therefore personally responsible for what you publish. Make sure you understand the requirements of the GDPR. more information about this here. *insert link to WLGA member page on GDPR*

Contact the Data Protection Officer in your council for more information.

Incitement - It is a criminal offence to incite any criminal act.

Discrimination and Racially Aggravated Offences (or any other protected Characteristic) - It is a criminal offence to make a discriminatory remark about anyone based on a "Protected Characteristic" as defined in The Equality Act (such as their race, religion, sexual orientation etc).

Malicious & Obscene Communications - It is a criminal offence to send malicious or obscene communications.

Civil Law

This is where things get riskier for anyone who uses Twitter or Facebook, whether they are councillors, members of the public or celebrities:

Defamation - It is against the law to make a false statement about someone which damages their personal or professional reputation. **Crucially - even if you simply retweet or pass on information originally posted by others, you may still be held equally as responsible as the original commentator.** This can also apply to publishing images. If found liable to another person, you could be ordered to pay large sums of money as damages.

Copyright - The legal ownership of the contents of documents, photos, videos and music belong to the person who created them. You could be in breach of copyright if you reproduce such material without the owner's permission. Always ask for written consent before you use someone else's material.

Political Comment and Electioneering - Remember that although it is acceptable to make political points or canvass votes via your own social media accounts this will not be permissible if you are using this via council supplied computer equipment, certainly in the run-up to elections. The Electoral Commission has further information about the return on expenditure that candidates need to provide on advertising or campaign literature.

BEWARE OF FAKE NEWS!

Social media is breeding ground for fake news or 'click bait' (where a deliberately salacious headline with a link tries to draw you in, often to a very mundane news item accompanied by lots of pop-up adverts); view all news or gossip with a discerning eye – it could be embarrassing if you retweet or promote fake news and, worse, you could be breaking the law if you circulate false statements about someone, even if you are just retweeting something someone else has posted.

Further information, interesting sites and sources of help

Bear in mind that information, sites and terminology change quickly. the next big social media platform will soon be on its way. Here are some current examples of information and useful sites but bear in mind that they may be quickly out of date.

Sign on to **Twitter** here
https://twitter.com/

Sign up to **Facebook** here
https://en-gb.facebook.com/

Social Media Checklist for Councillors (Local Government Association)
https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/comms-hub-communications-support/digital-communications/social-1

#FollowMe - A guide to social media for elected members in Scotland (Scottish Improvement Service)
http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/documents/elected_members/follow-me-guide-to-social-media-for-elected-members.pdf

Nextdoor

Is a social network for neighbourhoods where people who live within the same or neighbouring communities can share information, organise events and take opinion polls. It's a useful platform for members to raise awareness and tap into what is interesting or concerning local residents.

https://nextdoor.co.uk/about_us/