

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

WDA/04/15

Recommendation

That Members:

1. Approve the Social Media Policy attached at Appendix 1 ; and
2. Grant delegated powers to the Chief Executive to review and amend the Policy as appropriate in line with any future legislative or technological requirements.

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SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**WDA/04/15****Report of the Chief Executive****1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 Members are asked to approve the Social Media Policy to ensure that measures are in place to clearly set out how social media will be managed effectively to ensure any risks or pitfalls can be avoided or mitigated.
- 1.2 Members are also asked to grant delegated powers to the Chief Executive to review and amend the Policy as appropriate in line with any future technological or legislative changes.

2. Background

- 2.1 Social Media is at the forefront of modern communications; its capabilities are already being exploited by central and local government and various public and private sector organisations as a method of engagement with customers, stakeholders and partners.
- 2.2 'Social Media' is the term used for the current wave of online tools, websites and interactive media that enables users to interact with each other in various ways, through sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests.
- 2.3 Social Media involves building online communications or networks, which encourage participation, dialogue and involvement.
- 2.4 The Authority can benefit from taking an innovative approach to communicating with people, which can lead to greater involvement with service users, increased efficiencies and improvement in our reputation.
- 2.5 For social media to work effectively it is vital that it is used as part of the overall communications mix and provides up to date information about the Authority, its services and engagement activities.
- 2.6 In order to do this the Authority must set clear guidelines for the use of social media to ensure that they are used effectively and that their use does not expose the Authority to security risks or reputational damage.

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3. Current Position and Proposed Policy

- 3.1 The Authority currently uses a number of social media tools which enables it to actively engage with stakeholders and service users to provide information about its services and engagement activity.
- 3.2 All employees have the ability to access social media sites however; access to the Authority's corporate website accounts and online tools is strictly limited.
- 3.3 However, as social media advances so too does the option to utilise more online tools and websites for day to day business activity.
- 3.4 The use of social media can present a number of risks such as; Virus or other malware, damage to reputation, breaches of legislation or disclosure of confidential information.
- 3.5 The Authority does not currently have a Social Media Policy to ensure that where the Authority uses social media for business purposes, it does so in a controlled manner that enables it to engage safely and effectively with our employees, partners and people who use our services.
- 3.6 There are also no current clear guidelines for employees for the use of social media whether in a business or personal capacity.
- 3.7 The proposed Social Media Policy aims to ensure :
 - Engagement with individuals and partner organisations and successful promotion of Authority services through the use of social media
 - A consistent and corporate approach is adopted and maintained in the use of social media
 - That Authority information remains secure and is not compromised through the use of social media
 - That authorised users operate within existing policies, guidelines and relevant legislation
 - That the Authority's reputation is not damaged or adversely affected.
 - That the Authority is not exposed to legal and governance risks that can be significant.
- 3.8 The proposed Policy also provides a framework which ensures employees and Members are aware, that as representatives of the Authority, there are

standards and behaviour that are expected of them, whilst using social media as part of their business activity.

- 3.9 Although the Authority cannot control personal use of social media by employees and Members, it can, within the scope of this Policy stipulate the action to be taken if any inappropriate personal use or activity links them, by association to the Authority.
- 4.0 Approval of this Policy will allow employees and Members to realise the potential of social media as a business tool, by ensuring that the quality and content of the material published on behalf of the Authority is appropriate and not damaging to the Authority's reputation and credibility or otherwise violate any Authority policies.

4. Risk Implications

- 4.1 Failure to ensure that employees and Members are fully aware of their legal obligations in the use of Social Media may leave the Authority liable to criminal prosecution or civil action relating to breaches of legislation.
- 4.2 Approval of the Social Media Policy will ensure the Authority has set clear guidance on the use of social media and established arrangements to manage any potential risk that may arise.

5. HR Implications

- 5.1 Awareness training of the Social Media Policy will be provided to all employees of the Authority.
- 5.2 The Policy will be included in the Induction Process for all new employees and Members.
- 5.3 The Policy will be reviewed and updated in line with any future legislative requirements.

6. Environmental Implications

- 6.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 Social Media is fast becoming a major communication business tool within both public and private organisations. It enables users to interact with employees, service users and stakeholders with increased efficiency.
- 9.2 However, if misused social media can expose the Authority to security risks or reputational damage.
- 9.3 The Authority does not currently have a policy which identifies the proper and controlled use of Social Media.
- 9.4 The approval of the Social Media Policy will ensure that risks associated with the use of social media are controlled by setting clear guidance to all staff and Members on the appropriate use of social media tools.
- 9.5 The Policy will also ensure that use of any website or media tools are used in a sensible manner, in line with corporate policy to prevent damage to the Authority's reputation and credibility.

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The background documents to this report are open to inspection in accordance with Section 100D of The Local Government Act 1972 - Nil.