

Standards Committee	
Meeting Date	1 February 2023
Report Title	Social Media Policy
EMT Lead	Larissa Reed – Chief Executive
Head of Service	David Clifford – Head of Policy Governance and Customer Services
Lead Officer	Larissa Reed – Chief Executive
Classification	Open.
Recommendations	1. To propose the adoption of the Social Media Policy to Full Council

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the social media policy for councillors, which is to be considered at Full Council

2 Background

- 2.1 Social Media is a part of modern life. It can be used to disseminate information to a wider audience and it can enable councillors to link more closely with communities.
- 2.2 Social Media can also cause significant levels of distress and anxiety for users if it is used in a way which intends to cause harm.
- 2.3 Although, the council supports the use of social media, it was agreed by group leaders that it was important that policy guidelines were produced to assist members in understanding the legal obligations of a councillor when using social media, but also where and how to access help if they are victim to on line bullying

3. The proposal

- 3.1 A draft social media Policy can be found at appendix A

4 Other options considered and rejected by officers

- 4.1 Not to have social media policy – this was rejected as the policy will assist elected councillors in using social media safely

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The policy was developed following two Group Leader workshops which included all Group Leaders. The Policy was then considered by the constitutional working group.

5 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Renewing local democracy and making the council fit for the future. Social Media has the ability to reinvigorate democracy by increasing the reach of councillors and enabling more people to share views at a time that suits them
Financial, Resource and Property	There are no financial implications to this property
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The Nolan Principles of openness, accountability and leadership are the bedrock of this policy. In addition, the legal requirements around social media are set out in this policy. This is to protect the council and also councillors.
Crime and Disorder	On line hate is a growing problem. This policy gives some good practice on how to operate on social media to reduce crime and disorder issues
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	There are no environmental, climate or ecological emergency issues
Health and Wellbeing	The mental and physical health and well being of councillors is paramount. There is evidence increased levels of mental ill health caused by online bullying. The council has a duty of care to councillors and this policy sets out how councillors can protect their well and wellbeing when using social media.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	It is essential that councillors understand the impact of social media on vulnerable adults and young people. This policy should be read in conjunction with the councils safeguarding policies
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The effects of poor use of social media is a health and safety issues and all members using social media must consider their health and safety – both physical and mental.

Equality and Diversity	There are no specific Equality and Diversity issues with this policy other than it is unlawful to discriminate against people on social media.
Privacy and Data Protection	The policy sets out that members must not publish personal data of other people, including photographs, without their express permission to do so;

6 Appendices

6.1 Appendix A – Swale Councillors Social Media Policy

7 Background Papers

7.1 None