

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Strategic Lead – People & Technology****Corporate Services Committee: 13th February 2019**

Subject: Review of social media policy**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to update the committee on the review of the social media policy and the subsequent changes made.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to approve the revised social media policy (as detailed in Appendix 1).

3. Background

- 3.1** West Dunbartonshire Council is committed to ensuring good practice in relation to equality and diversity obligations on social media platforms for employees. The Council provides employees with clear guidance on expected standards of behaviour when using social media and the social media policy, implemented in August 2013 supports this aim.
- 3.2** Since the introduction of the social media policy, these practices have been used to protect employees and the council from being exposed to or posting defamatory/negative comments on social media platforms.
- 3.3** As a result of an agreed motion to Council in October 2018, the policy was reviewed in conjunction with Trades Union colleagues.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** Since the introduction of the policy, there have been changes to how social media impacts daily living and the appropriate access and use of these platforms in organisations, especially those in the public domain. As with any policy review, technical changes have been made to reflect this.
- 4.2** As part of the review, amendments were made in agreement with Trade Union colleagues to support effective joint understanding as part of this process.
- 4.3** There has also been an effort made to provide more clarity in areas of the policy where this was felt to be required. Examples have been provided in section 10.6 and 12.5 which expand on the terminology and the separate

social media guidance document has now been incorporated into the policy, which is sections 10, 11 and 12.

- 4.4** Additional sections 12.11 and 12.12 have been added to provide clarity on the position of Trade Unions and Elected members on social media. Previously, there was no mention of the additional dimension to the Trades Union role as compared to employees and their additional political voice has been explicitly included. These paragraphs derived from what is already established in the Code of Conduct and Standards Commissions Scotland – Councillors’ Code of Conduct, and these are referenced to within the additional sections.
- 4.5** It was agreed that the policy would also benefit from further guidance in section 12.5 in relation to private/personal use of social media. Additional examples are now included to clarify situations especially where the policy is referenced in investigation and/or disciplinary matters. The revised policy provides reasonable examples of this practice and clearly details what is expected of all parties.
- 4.6** It is anticipated that this additional information added to the policy will further support how it’s managed within the organisation and ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities, encouraging a best practice approach and to help minimise conduct issues.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** The establishment of a clear framework for social media use is critical for the promotion and maintenance of effective employee relations and for the reputation of the Council.
- 5.2** The policy for employees is accessible on the intranet and is a mandatory part of the induction e-learning module and skills passport. Legislation associated with the policy i.e. Data Protection is an annual refresher e-learn course which is sent out to the workforce by e-mail.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** There are no financial implications associated with revision of this policy and procedure.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** Application of the revised policy and practice will mitigate against potential risks by ensuring the fair and effective management of employees affected and without clear guidance for employees on the use of Social media inconsistencies in practice will occur across departments.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 The original equalities impact assessment conducted in 2013 has been reviewed and updated. In 2013, research showed younger employees (22-35 age group) use social media more and consequently there may have been an indirect impact on the age characteristic for this reason. However, this risk has decreased since the first EIA was conducted as research from 2018 now shows that this age group has expanded to (16-44) covering more of the workforce.

9. Consultation

9.1 The changes to the social media policy have been discussed fully with the Joint Trade Unions. The changes were discussed at the Convenors meetings on the 13th November 2018 and 14th January 2019 and subsequently agreed.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 The social media policy aims to ensure that the responsibilities of stakeholders with regards to social media are observed fairly and consistently in accordance with current legislation and best practice.

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Appendices: Appendix 1 – Social Media Policy

Background Papers: EIA

Wards Affected: None