Report for: Staffing & Remuneration Committee, 26 November 2019

Title: Social Media Practice Notes

Report authorised by : Richard Grice – Director of Customers, Transformation and Resources

Lead Officer: Ian Morgan, Reward Strategy Manager

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Report for Key/ Non Key Decision:

1 Describe the issue under consideration

As part of the Council's requirement to conduct a rolling review of all HR policies, Members are asked to consider the revised Social Media Practice Notes (attached as Appendix 1).

2 Cabinet Member Introduction

Not applicable.

3 Recommendations

That the Committee note the new Social Media Practice Notes ready for implementation with effect from 1st January 2020. Communication of the changes will be managed by the Web Communications team.

4 Reason for Decision

4.1 The policy currently in use was last updated in March 2014. As the organisations Code of Conduct has been reviewed in June 2019 it is important that any policies or practice notes that relate to it are updated in line with our Code of Conduct.

4.2 It is best practice across local authorities to have social media guidance, rather than a policy as this would duplicate the employee Code of Conduct. Activity over social media will be treated the same as activity in the workplace, for example, verbally in the workplace, on the phone, or in person.

5 Alternative options considered

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The rolling review of HR policy is a requirement of the Internal Audit recommendations.

6 Background information

6.1 The practice notes apply to all staff, in particular those who manage social media accounts, and covers professional and personal use of social media.

6.2 This guidance is not applicable to elected members, as they have their own guidance. Staff employed in Children's Services or Adult Social Services may have additional guidance due to their roles.

6.3 The key pieces of information from the practice notes:
- The guidance outlines how staff should use social media in a professional capacity, giving clear guidance on who can respond to comments on social media within the organisation.
- Step by step guidance is included on what to do in the case of a social media crisis, to manage the organisations reputational risk.
- Guidance is given on staffs' duty to ensure the boundary between professional use and personal use of social media is held. Social media is a public forum and the same considerations would apply as, say, to speaking in public or writing for a publication either officially or out of work.

7 Statutory Officers' comments

7.1 Chief Finance Officer
There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7.2 Assistant Director of Corporate Governance
Whilst the council's social media channels support the council discharge its functions, legal liabilities can arise from the use of social media by employees (whether for council business or for personal use) and blurring the interface between employees' work and personal lives. Therefore it is important to minimise legal risks in the workplace relating to the use of social media,

The Council has in place appropriate policies to ensure that Council information remains secure and is not compromised through use of social media, and to ensure that all employees use social media lawfully, comply with relevant legislation and that Council's reputation is not damaged or affected adversely.

The Social Media Practice Note (Appendix 1) provides guidance which clearly indicate to employees that online behaviour, for business and personal use should conform to appropriate standards to ensure that consistent and corporate approach is adopted and maintained in the use of social media.

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8 Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Social Media Practice Notes

9 Local government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Not applicable**.**

Appendix 1 - Social Media Practice Notes

October 2019

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Social media helps us to communicate with the public; consult and engage; and be more transparent and accountable. This guidance has been developed so that staff can connect with, inform and listen to our residents in a responsible and confident manner, and to minimise the risks to our business through use of social media.

Using social media can:

- increase community engagement and offer responsive communication
- improve democratic engagement
- support emergency and crisis communications
- deliver savings in communication and collaboration
- help us deliver effective services to our residents
- share messages which are aligned to the corporate communications strategy, including recruitment campaigns.

We currently have a range of corporate and service-based social media accounts running on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Flickr. They range from the generic corporate Twitter feed (largely used for letting people know about news and events and is increasingly being seen as a key customer service channel) to service/interest-based accounts such as Haringey Youth Space and Libraries.

2. Scope

This guidance applies to all staff, consultants and agency workers in particular those who manage and use all forms of Council social media accounts. It also applies to use, of social media for council business purpose as well as and covers professional and personal use of social that may affect Council business in any way media.

This guidance is not applicable to elected members, as they have their own guidance.

Staff employed in Children and Adult Services, or schools may have additional guidance due to their roles.

This guidance covers all types of social media. It also covers private messages sent over online channels such as direct messaging via Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp.

3. Links to other policies

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Employee Code of Conduct, Customer Care Standards, Dignity at Work Policy and the Internet Security Policy.

Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of our other policies. Any activity using social media, which could be deemed a breach of our employee Code of Conduct and/or any other policy may lead to disciplinary action. Activity over social media will be treated the same as activity in the workplace, for example, verbally in the workplace on the phone or in person.

Staff who manage an approved Haringey Council social media channel must also follow the Social Media Tone of Voice Guidance.

4. Professional use of social media

4.1 General/key customer service channels

Key customer service channels such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Flickr, are managed centrally in line with our web publishing standards. Unless you are an authorised administrator for those channels, you should not respond to comments or enquiries on these channels.

We use social media monitoring and management tools for key customer service channels, but if you become aware of a comment in a blog, forum, or on social media that you think we should respond to, please contact the Communications team who can respond on the council's behalf.

If you become aware of a comment on any social media platform that you think the council should respond to, please:

- do not reply to the comment directly
- contact the Communications team so they can respond on the council's behalf.

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4.2 Service/interest-based accounts

Some services have their own social media accounts that they use to communicate with service users, such as Haringey Youth Space and Libraries. Advice and assistance on developing and maintaining a successful social media channel will be provided by the Digital Communications team and is available on the intranet.

4.2.1 General principles

All information and responses you post on social media as an employee are public statements, count as a council record and are evidence of the council's work. They may be used as reference at any time in the future.

Please remember that you are responsible for anything that you say online. When using social media, please:

- **be professional** - remember that you are an ambassador for the Council.
- **be responsible** - be honest at all times and share learning and good practice with others where appropriate.
- **respect copyright.**
- **be credible, accurate, fair, and thorough**.

4.2.2 Setting up a social media channel

Our preferred approach is to communicate with our residents is through the existing corporate social media channels rather than create many different council channels for people to deal with. There are times however when a new separate channel is required.

Any social media channel set up on behalf of the council must be authorised in advance by the Assistant Director for Strategy and Communications. This is to ensure that the channel is:

- required
- consistent with our strategic objectives
- properly resourced
- meets our branding guidelines.

The process for developing a new social media channel involves initial meetings with the Digital Communications team to discuss requirements, completion of a project checklist and, where appropriate, a business case.

The process for developing a new social media channel involves:

- meeting the Digital Communications team to discuss requirements
- completing a project checklist
- where appropriate, completing a business case.

A range of materials are available, including tutorials, guidance documents, videos and e-learning modules to assist people working with social media to better realise the benefits and avoid the risks. These are also available through the intranet.

4.2.3 Managing social media accounts

All our social media channels need to be managed professionally in line with our web publishing standards. To ensure the channels meet these standards the Communications team will centrally monitor activity on a regular basis using social media monitoring and management tools.

As part of this process owners of council social media channels must:

- comply with our guidelines on publishing to ensure the quality and accuracy of content
- have designated staff who manage the account
- be available to participate in regular reviews of the channel
- be aware of service users' privacy, and when to move conversations to a private channel
- notify the Digital Communications team of any changes in staff, ensuring any staff using the channel have been properly trained and made aware of the usage guidelines
- ensure the Digital Communications team have up to date copies of all usernames and passwords.

If you are not sure whether to respond or not to comments received on social media, follow the simple flowchart in the Appendix for guidance.

4.2.4 Security

To ensure the security of these channels, social media account holders must:

- change passwords every time a member of staff who had access leaves the organisation
- ensure passwords are sufficiently complex a minimum of eight characters, including numbers and a mixture of upper- and lower-case letters
- have a system for changing passwords regularly in line with our security policy

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- provide the Communications team with administrative access to the channel in case of emergencies and to enable cross-posting and effective monitoring
- make use of any centrally managed secure social media management tool.

4.2.5 What to do if something goes wrong

This guidance is designed to help us responsibly manage our social media channels and avoid crises. Mistakes can happen, and it is important that we respond appropriately.

If you post something you did not mean to, get a message or response wrong, or spot a potential issue (e.g. a Councillor posts something inappropriate), then follow this process immediately to agree remedial action and minimise embarrassment and reputational damage:

1. Tell your line manager and notify the Communications team immediately. They will assess the severity and notify the Head of Communications, Assistant Director for Strategy and Communications and the CEO if necessary.

   If your line manager is not available speak to the next most senior officer.

2. Delete the message if possible and appropriate.

3. The Communications Team will do a reputational risk assessment, to determine if we respond as a council, investigate or do not engage.

4. If necessary, the Communications team will create a crisis communication plan and stop all scheduled posts.

5. If it looks likely to become reputational issue, make the Leader aware.

4.2.6 Elections and pre-election period

During an election period we need to be particularly aware of the strict rules on impartiality and publicity. For detailed information on publicity during an election period, read the council's guidance.

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4.2.7 Media enquiries

Unless you are a member of the Communications team or have their permission, please avoid any media enquiries

5. Personal use of social media

All staff are, of course, free to use social media in their own time, so long as it does not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content, does not interfere with your employment responsibilities or productivity and complies with council policies.

Staff must be mindful both professionally and personally of their duties as employees under the council's values of being:

- accountable
- ambitious
- human
- professional.

The simple rule to remember is that the principles covering the use of social media by council staff in both at work in a professional capacity and personal capacity are the same as those that apply for any other activity. Social media is a public forum and the same considerations would apply as, say, to speaking in public or writing for a publication either officially or out of work.
In social media the boundaries between professional and personal use can become blurred, what we say online can quickly move outside of our control (regardless of privacy settings) - so it is important to be particularly careful.

Staff's social media activity could have a negative impact on their professional role or the council's image and reputation. We will not tolerate any of the following activity on social media if it can be connected to you as an employee of the council:

- Abusive or threatening behaviour, including to harass bully any person
- Inappropriate comments or material that may be regarded as discriminatory against any one
- False or misleading statements that could have a negative effect on the council's reputation
- Post comments about council sensitive business related matters, confidential information
- The inclusion of the Councils logo in any social media posting, or in your profile on any social media
- To impersonate colleagues or any person
- Inciting or supporting somebody to commit a crime or other unlawful acts
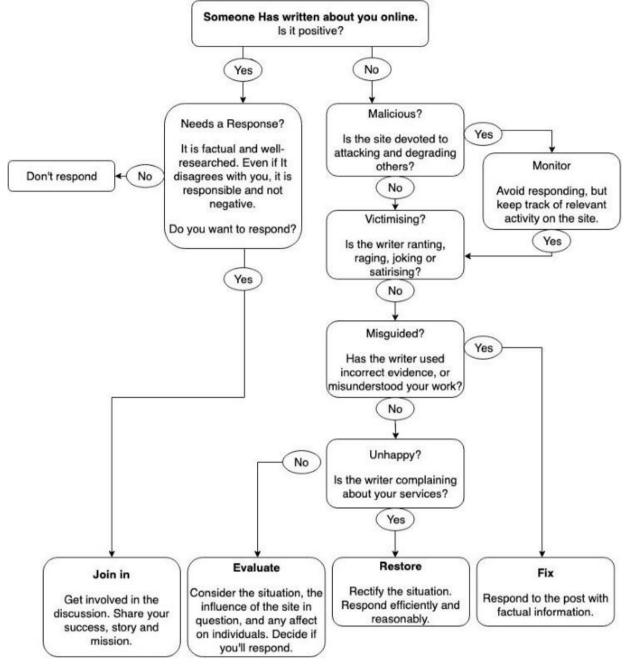
6. Further information

If you have any queries regarding the setting up or usage of social media in the organisation, please contact the Digital Communications Team on x6951 or webcommunications@haringey.gov.uk

If you need advice relating to employee usage of social media, or the council Code of Conduct, then please contact Human Resources or your directorate HR contact.

Appendix

Someone Has written about you online.
Is it positive?

Yes → **Needs a Response?**

It is factual and well-researched. Even if It disagrees with you, it is responsible and not negative.

Do you want to respond?

No → **Don't respond**

Yes ↓

No → **Malicious?**

Is the site devoted to attacking and degrading others?

Yes → **Monitor**

Avoid responding, but keep track of relevant activity on the site.

Yes ↓

No → **Victimising?**

Is the writer ranting, raging, joking or satirising?

No → **Misguided?**

Has the writer used incorrect evidence, or misunderstood your work?

Yes → **Fix**

Respond to the post with factual information.

No → **Unhappy?**

Is the writer complaining about your services?

No → **Evaluate**

Yes → **Restore**

Rectify the situation. Respond efficiently and reasonably.

Join in

Get involved in the discussion. Share your success, story and mission.

Evaluate

Consider the situation, the influence of the site in question, and any affect on individuals. Decide if you'll respond.

Restore

Rectify the situation. Respond efficiently and reasonably.

Fix

Respond to the post with factual information.

Before you respond...

Be transparent	Cite sources	Don't rush	Ge the tone right	Focus
Be honest about your connection to the story	Be clear about your sources, and include links to them.	Take time to make your response a good one.	Reflect your organisation's richness and test your response on a colleague.	Focus on your most influential online activity.

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