

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Standards Committee
Date: 17 March 2015
Report for: Decision
Report of: Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Report Title

Social Media – Training for Members.

Summary

This report highlights some of the issues raised through the use of social media and seeks approval to roll out social media training for all members.

Recommendation(s)

1. The contents of this report are noted.
2. That approval is given for provision of social media training for all members.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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Relationship to Corporate Priorities	These are as set out in this report
Financial	There may be a cost if the training is delivered externally.
Legal Implications	<i>These are as set out in the report.</i>
Equality/Diversity Implications	<i>These have been considered as part of the report.</i>
Sustainability Implications	<i>Not applicable.</i>
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management Implications	<i>Not applicable</i>
Risk Management Implications	<i>These are as set out in the report.</i>
Health and Safety Implications	<i>N/A</i>

1 Background

- 1.1 The starting point is to identify what is social media. Social media is a collective term used to describe the ways to create and publish on the internet. Individuals generally use the term to describe how organisations and individuals share content such as text, video and pictures and create conversations on the web. It is transforming the way that companies do business and individuals interact with each other. It is also providing a voice for those who weren't well heard before.
- 1.2 Social media is all about community. It connects people together, helps them share who they are, encourages conversation and builds trust. Social media will change the way that councillors interact with local people. Councillors, as local leaders, have a key role to play in promoting changes to the way people engage and communicate. It provides a tremendous opportunity for local leaders to use social media to engage with a wider range of people in a more focused way. However, the use of social media carries with it a level of risk.

2 Issues

- 2.1 Whilst, there are many advantages to embracing social media, it is a form of communication that carries a level of risk, such as, for example, the possibility of misunderstandings. Furthermore, although the use of social media is conversational in tone, what is 'said' on the web is written down and it's usually permanent. Councillors have the same legal duties online as anyone else, but failure to comply with the law may have more serious consequences. Councillors need to think about them in this new context. These consequences include;
- Libel (publishing an untrue statement about a person which is damaging to their reputation)
 - Copyright (placing images or text from a copyrighted source, for example, extracts from publications or photos without permission)
 - Data Protection (publishing the personal data of individuals without their express written permission)
 - Bias and pre-determination (publishing anything that might suggest the Councillor does have an open mind about a matter they are involved in determining)

- Potential breach of the Members' Code of Conduct

2.2 The rise of the use of social media has brought many advantages but also carries with it a number of risks. It is proposed that members are given detailed training to raise awareness of the issues which can arise through the use of social media. This will help minimise the risks associated with the use of social media.