

North Tyneside Council

Report to Standards Committee

Date: 22 June 2017

ITEM 6

Title: Regional Meeting
of Standards
Committee Chairs and
Deputy Chairs and
Independent Persons

Report from Service

Area: Law and Governance

Report Author: Vivienne Geary, Head of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer (Tel: 643 5339)

Wards affected: All

1.1 Purpose:

To provide a report on the Regional Meeting of the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Standards Committees and Independent Persons held on 3 April 2017.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

The Committee is requested to note:

- a) the report and the action points identified; and
- b) the proposed social media training specification.

1.3 Information

1.3.1 North Tyneside hosted a Regional Meeting of Standards Committee Chairs and Deputy Chairs and Independent Persons on 3 April 2017.

1.3.2 The event was well attended with nearly 30 delegates from 10 authorities. The purpose of the event was to allow the sharing of knowledge and experience developed since the inception of the new Standards regime in 2012. The session was very informal with most of the work being undertaken in small groups followed by feed back to the wider group.

1.3.3 The group discussions enabled the identification of key themes and issues which have then been used to form the basis of an action list for use by the Monitoring Officers to formulate appropriate responses and actions, with the potential for regional activities. The identified actions points are enclosed at Appendix 1.

1.3.4 The action points included in particular a request from delegates for further development and training in relation to the use of social media. In order to progress this request as soon as possible enquiries of a training provider on this topic have been made and a proposed training specification has been received and is attached at Appendix 2. The training specification has been shared with other Monitoring Officers to seek expressions of interest. It is anticipated that the training proposed will be delivered at a regional level as soon as possible with the costs associated with the training divided between the Authorities that participate.

1.3.5 The Monitoring Officers are to meet in June/July 2017 (an earlier meeting had to be postponed) to further consider the action points and to formulate responses accordingly. Further details of the responses proposed to the action points will be provided to Members in due course.

1.4 Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Action List from Regional Meeting on 3 April 2017.
Appendix 2 - Social Media Training Proposal.

1.5 Contact officers:

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1.5 Background information:

None.

Action Points from Regional Meeting of Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Standards Committees and Independent Persons – 3 April 2017.

1. The development of a Do's and Dont's guide to use of Social Media including advice on when a Member is a Member for the purpose of the Code.
2. Development and introduction of a protocol annexed to the Code of Conduct on the use of social media by Members.
3. Training on:
 - Social Media;
 - Interaction with the Press; and
 - Chairmanship of meetings.
4. Development of a Regional Standards Bulletin.
5. A programmed approach to attendance of Members at another Authority's Standards Committee/other Regulatory Committees be developed.
6. Sharing of decisions made, including assessment decision, across the region to provide benchmarking information.

Social Media Training for Elected Members

The proposed workshop content:

What is meant by social media?

- Introduction to social media platforms and access to them
- Definitions
 - Social media
 - Personal blog
 - Media devices
 - Members of the public – including journalists
- What is public knowledge and what is more 'hidden'
- Use of devices during Council meetings
- There is no 'delete'!!

Good 'Netiquette'

- Make your commenting policy clear
- Allow disagreement
- Etiquette and style
- Think before you publish
- 'Following' and 'friending'
- What happens if you make a mistake
- Avoid difficult users
- Privacy settings
- Letting people know who you are
- Golden rules
- Simple Dos and don'ts

Conduct issues

- Personal responsibility for what you publish
 - Who to ask for support in your Council
- Dual-hatted members
- Social media and Council meetings
- Safeguarding

Social networking legally

- Council's legal position
- Libel
- Equality Act 2010
- Copyright
- Obscene materials
- Bullying and discriminatory comments
- Additional documentation

- Members Code of Conduct
- Protocol for Members' Enquiries
- Protocol on the use of media tools at meetings held in public
- Information Security Policy
- The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014

Defamation

- Definition of defamation
- Responsibility of retweeting – shared with the original commentator
- Relates to images as well as written content

Data protection

- The importance of not publishing personal data on individuals – linked to Data Protection Guide for Councillors
- In-confidence information

Understanding the source and information before sharing/re-tweeting

- Importance of validating the validity of the information in the post and also the source of the post before sharing:
 - Northumbria Police response to recent social media reporting of a serious assault in Sunderland in 2016
 - North Tyneside Councillor sharing potentially anti-Semitic post on Facebook

Predetermination/predisposition and social media

- Difference between predisposition and predetermination
- The importance of non-bias in use of social media
- Planning or licencing applications
- Commenting on ongoing and future activities
- Future impacts of predetermination on Council decisions

Personal social media accounts vs public authority social media accounts, which is best

- Personal vs private accounts
- Blurred identities
- Most on-line activity will be linked to your

Political comment and electioneering

- Use of council supplied equipment
- Purdah