

SC/002/13

Committee: The Essex County Council and Essex Fire Authority Joint Standards Committee

Date: 15 January 2013

Report of the Assistant Director, Corporate Law and Monitoring Officer of the Council and the Clerk and Monitoring Officer of the Fire Authority
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Social Media Protocol

1. Purpose of Report

To invite the Joint Committee to consider the adoption of a social media protocol to assist members in their use of social media.

2. Decision Areas and Recommendations

- 2.1. Recommended that the Joint Committee approve and adopt the draft Social Media Protocol set out in the appendix to this report.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Localism Act 2011 introduced a new standards regime for local (and fire) authority members. Under S.27 (2) the Council and the Fire Authority were required to adopt a new code of member conduct and this the Fire Authority and the Council did at their meetings on 5th September and 16th October 2012.
- 3.2 Social Media is becoming an important part of the operation of a democratic society. For members it is an efficient and cost-effective way of keeping in touch with residents and businesses and discussing issues with their communities.
- 3.3 The draft protocol in the appendix to this report provides guidance to members and co-opted members of Essex County Council and the Essex Fire Authority based upon their Codes of Member Conduct. It has been drafted to assist members as they explore and develop their use of social media. There has already been one workshop to assist County Council members in doing this and more are planned.

4. Relevance to the County Council's and the Fire Authority's Corporate and other Strategic Plans.

The proposals set out in this paper are wholly consistent with the Council's Code of Governance, the Leader and Chief Executive's Governance Statement and the Council's Annual Governance Statement for 2011/12 all of which embed the Nolan principles. The proposals are also consistent with the Council's transformation strategy.

5. Legal Implications

The Council and the Fire Authority are under a duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members.

6. Finance and Human Resources Implications

There are no financial or human resources implications arising from this report.

8. Equality Impact Assessment

The Code of conduct prohibits members from doing anything that would breach the equality enactments. The draft protocol extends this principle into their use of social media.

9. Background Papers

None

Appendix

Draft Social Media Protocol