

APPENDIX 3

Monitoring Officer Guidance

A few top tips for members using social media

These best practice guidelines for using social media are to help members engage with an audience and also avoid the pitfalls and risks of challenge.

Social media is a type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate or to share information in a public forum. This includes online social forums such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Social media also covers blogs and video and image-sharing websites such as YouTube and Flickr. There are many more examples of social media than are listed here and this is a constantly changing area. These guidelines aim to help members make the most out of social media tools.

What you write on social networking sites is essentially in the public domain, even if you have privacy settings or material is posted on a closed profile or group. You need to consider if you would be happy for this tweet or Facebook message to appear in the national press and bear in mind words and phrases can be taken and presented out of context. Any use of social media made by you as a member needs to be in compliance with the **Member Code of Conduct**.

Always consider

- Do I need to respond to this tweet/text?
- Think about your response and re-read before sending

Content

- Be mindful that what you publish may be public for a long time
- Respect copyright laws
- Do not publish or report information or conversations that are meant to be private without explicit permission. "Conversations" may be oral or e-mail exchanges
- Maintain confidential information and data protection rules -don't include personal information about someone else without their consent
- When retweeting or sharing content, think about whether adding any text will benefit the message. Don't just automatically share; think whether a prelude would be preferable. Add a level of engagement - show you have put thought into it.
- When sharing or retweeting content take a moment to check previous messages from the same person or organisation. While you might agree with their latest message, be aware that previous postings could clash with your intentions. . It's important to remember that the legal risks relate to retweets and sharing content just as much as to original tweets
- Avoid repetition and add variety to the content of messages to give a more personal presence
- When talking about individuals, make sure to include them in the tweet with an '@' if you wish to speak to them directly, and be aware of how your message might be taken
- Where questions are posed through social media that are of a private, contentious or irrelevant nature, ask users to make contact directly to discuss their concerns

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- Where questions are posed through social media that are relevant, proactively respond and engage

The social media protocol available for staff on the Source can provide useful guidance and can be found here: [The Source • Social Media Protocol](#)

Emergencies

If an emergency in the borough – such as an unexploded bomb in Bermondsey – occurs, please refer to www.southwark.gov.uk for the latest and accurate information; be aware that the public will view your social media as being a reliable source of information in these circumstances.

Style and tone

- Be consistent. Be reliable.
- Images - when posting an image think: who will this interest? Will this attract attention and/or inform?
- “Retweetability” - think about the tone of communications and how they might be shared across social media platforms. Be friendly, open and honest.
- Reach out to people and organisations, engage, write messages, collaborate, and build mutually supportive relationships through reciprocity
- Keep language simple and avoid acronyms
- Be mindful to use good grammar and punctuation.
- Avoid use of ALL CAPITALS as it can give the wrong impression e.g. (appears as if you are shouting)

Further Guidance

If you require any further clarification on this guidance, please contact the following officers:

Doreen Forrester-Brown, Monitoring Officer – ext. 57502

Norman Coombe, Deputy Monitoring Officer – ext. 57678

Doreen Forrester-Brown

Director of Law and Democracy

Date issued:

Appendix 1

There are a number of potential legal risks associated with social media including:

- Making defamatory or derogatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups
- Potential harm to reputation
- Impact on people's right to privacy
- False or misleading statements
- Data Protection infringement
- Breach of copyright, e.g. using someone else's image or written content without permission

There are a number of potential legal consequences as a result of the above including injunctions, order to remove statement, compensation or damages awarded and very punitive awards are possible.

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Appendix 2

Twitter Basics (From Tweeting as a Cultural Organisation, Taras Young)

Twitter is a social network that lets you compose status updates, or “tweets”, which are limited to 140 characters. Web links use up 22 characters, regardless of how long they are (links to secure sites, starting https://, use up 23 characters).

If you attach an image to your tweet, this will use 23 characters.

@ExampleOrg (the sender) and @amadigital are usernames. Usernames always begin with an @ symbol, and are not case-sensitive. When you mention someone else’s username in a tweet, they get alerted.

#twitter and #cats are hash tags. Adding a # symbol before a word turns the word into a link. This lets others browse related concepts, and can help new people find your tweet.

Twitter is based around the concept of timelines – chronological lists of tweets. You might also hear this referred to as a ‘Twitter stream’ or ‘feed’. Your timeline shows all the tweets sent by people you follow. You can also view an individual user’s timeline, which shows just the tweets they’ve sent.

If you put a username at the start of a tweet, it is visible to you, the recipient, and anyone who follows you both:

However, tweets are not private – anyone looking directly at @ExampleOrg’s timeline in the example above, or searching for any of the words used in the tweet, would be able to see it.

To start a tweet with a username, and have all your followers see it, put a full stop before the message. Retweeting - If there’s a particular tweet you’ve seen which you like, you can retweet it. This simply means highlighting a tweet so those following you can enjoy it too. There are a few ways to retweet:

- Press the ‘retweet’ button in your Twitter app. This will send the tweet to everyone who follows you, while retaining the original sender’s details.
- An ‘old-style’ retweet: quote the whole tweet, adding RT @username: at the start.