

## **SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS**

### Introduction

The use of social media by Members has become commonplace and is likely to continue to develop. Social media does, however, involve some potential issues and this Guidance has been produced with the assistance of Governance and Constitution Committee.

### Members' Code of Conduct

Members using social media should be mindful of the obligations placed on them in the Members' Code of Conduct, e.g. respect for others. Members should also appreciate that it may be difficult to separate comments made in their personal capacity from those made in their official capacity.

Engaging in social media activity during meetings may give the wrong impression to observers. Particular care is needed when a contentious matter or Part 2 item is under consideration.

### General Guidance

Communicate clearly
An informal style tends to work best
Show respect and consideration for others
Try to be positive, polite and professional in your approach
Avoid unhelpful online arguments
Set up the right privacy settings and have strong passwords
Regularly monitor your social media content – comments/posts etc. by others could prove to be problematical
Be clear when acting in an official capacity
Don't say anything or post views or opinions that you would not be prepared to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Discuss face to face with the person you are referring to</li><li>- Write in a letter to the press or have quoted in a news report</li><li>- Have minuted in a public meeting</li></ul>
Pause before posting – do not act in haste
Be particularly careful if considering posting when tired or emotional when judgement can be impaired
Appreciate that irony and sarcasm may be misinterpreted
If you feel you have made a mistake be prepared to admit it and apologise
Ignore or consider blocking people that become vexatious and are persistent
Be aware of restrictions on what you can do

### Restrictions

You should not breach copyright

You should not disclose confidential information

You should not publish defamatory statements

You should have an understanding of data protection requirements

You should be careful not to publish material that suggests 'predetermination'

You should follow any PURDAH guidance