



Excela Interim Management & Consultancy Ltd

MAKING SOCIAL MEDIA WORK FOR COUNCILLORS

COURSE NOTES

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INTRODUCTION

These notes have been prepared by Kevin O'Keefe, Director of Excela Interim Management & Consultancy Ltd.

Kevin is a Bachelor of Laws with honours and has been Solicitor for almost 25 years. He initially entered private practice in Wales during the 1980's and dealt with a wide range of litigation, contract and public law matters, including his fair-share of criminal cases. He has dealt with everything from personal injury claims to murder trials. Kevin became a partner and then managing partner in a provincial firm of solicitors, before deciding to pursue his career in the public sector.

Kevin entered Local Government in 2001. Within a few months he was appointed Deputy Monitoring Officer and headed the Legal Services department in a Unitary Authority. He held those posts until he established Excela in 2012. During his tenure in Local Government, Kevin dealt with a variety of high profile matters including the nationally-renowned prosecution of Cadbury Plc after their products were contaminated with salmonella. This prosecution resulted in a then record-high fine for a food hygiene case in the UK of £ 1 million. He has also dealt with numerous groundbreaking planning cases, celebrated judicial reviews as well as being an experienced senior corporate manager. Kevin has also been at the forefront of the development of nationally unique cross-sector public services embracing Health & Local Government under a single Chief Executive. He is a past Governor of several educational institutions and is passionate about Elected Member Development.

Kevin is a Member of the Law Society of England & Wales and a past Member of the Association of County Secretaries & Solicitors. He has wide ranging radio and television experience.

Through Excela, he now provides a range of cost-effective training, consulting and interim management solutions for the public sector.

Kevin is a professional advocate and a sought-after presenter of seminars and training events.

A keen amateur cook and past Regional Finalist in TV's Masterchef, Kevin lives in Wales with his family.



COMMUNICATION.....

Ever since mankind has been on Earth, we have always sought to communicate thoughts, ideas and beliefs to others. Our ancestors painted primitive pictures on the walls of caves, the earliest known examples of which, at El Castillo caves in Spain, date back 40,000 years. Even though they could not write, we nowadays still have a vivid insight into the lifestyle of our ancestors. It's often said that a picture paints a thousand words. In those ancient times, pictures and symbols were the sole mode of publication.

Slowly, but surely, pictures gave way to other more sophisticated ways of communicating, such as the scribes in ancient Egypt using hieroglyphic images, as a form of text.

Over many centuries, individual countries developed alphabets and languages of their own. However, literacy was generally limited to the rich and to the clergy. In those days, books were all handwritten and hand illuminated. They were necessarily rare and regarded as luxuries for the few.

Then, when William Caxton invented the printing press in the 15th Century, there was at last, a method to communicate thoughts and ideas much more widely and much more efficiently than had ever been thought possible before. The printed word could reach the masses, as too could illustrations and pictures. The numbers of those who could both read and write grew enormously.

Whilst we now live in a highly literate society, pictures and symbols today still evoke strong emotions. We all feel a sense of security and being cared for when we see the familiar sign of the Red Cross. Every person recognises and is stirred by the sight of their national flag. Symbols and pictures still act as very powerful images.

In the last hundred years we have become surrounded by other familiar symbols, ranging from pictorial road signs to corporate branded logos.

There are however some new kids on the block – these are the logos of internet social media sites. It's the new form of communication. They appear everywhere and tens of millions of internet users immediately recognise them and know how they are utilised.



IT'S NOT FOR ME.....

Until the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, most homes happily got by with just their wireless sets. Then from the early-1950's, households began to acquire televisions and its flickering style of black & white communication became quickly accepted. The 80's pop song was of course wrong - Video *did not* Kill the Radio Star. Both channels of communication still harmoniously co-exist along with numerous new types of media.

Many of us remember back in the 1970's, that the UK's three TV stations all closed around midnight, with the playing of the national anthem. Back then, news broadcasts occurred around three times a day, and largely coincided with traditional main meals. Today, most households have SKY or Cable TV services which allow them to watch world-wide events in real-time around the clock, while having access to hundreds of other television channels. People don't always dine at traditional meal times. Even the so called 'peak-time' broadcasts have become of historic importance only, as viewers use on-demand, pod cast or SKY+ to watch favourite programmes at their convenience.

Both technology and the times have changed. Things are now routinely done on demand and done on-line.

The last Census of 2011 revealed that there are *62 million* people in the UK, with an average age of 39 years. Of that figure, *48 million* inhabitants are adults. They each have a vote. The average age of computer users in the UK is 36 years old - they also each have a vote.

One social media site alone – Facebook – has a staggering *33 million* account holders in Britain. Other social media sites, like Twitter have millions more followers. The numbers speak for themselves.

Research by the Local Government Association in 2011 revealed that the average age of Councillors in the UK is 60 years old. Elected Members who have not yet fully embraced social media, will increasingly miss-out on the channel of choice for communication with the public. It's also a two-way street, as social media further empowers members to learn views being expressed by both their constituents and local groups in real time.

Do you use social media effectively? If not, why not?



SOCIAL MEDIA

Humans are a *social* species. The values of family and friendship figure strongly in every society on Earth. For centuries people have formed clubs, associations and institutions where they can mix, mingle and communicate with each other. In every television soap opera there is always a venue, be it a pub, shop, workplace or café where the characters can meet, chat and interact. That's no accident. It's a deliberate reflection of society. It's how people, from separate households have traditionally socialised. It's how they networked.

However, traditional social venues are dependent on their visitors having a common interest. Not everyone visits a pub or social club regularly. Not everyone works in the same factory. Not everybody uses the local gym or leisure centre. Those who socialise at one or two of those venues, tend only to see other 'regulars'.

Similarly, when I was at school, all of my friends were around me on a daily basis. I could tell them things and they, in turn, could tell me their news. When we all went off to Universities, in the 1980's, we could only afford to make occasional telephone calls to each other. In reality, we would only fully catch-up when we returned home every few months, at the end of each term.

And then it happened.....

The internet was invented. It quickly developed, as predicted by Senator Al Gore, into an information super-highway. People aren't now just *used* to shopping on line. People aren't now just *used* to banking on line or *used* to booking travel on line. It's now an *expectation* that they can do mostly everything through the internet. Nowadays people don't just connect to the internet at home or at work. They're constantly connected to it through their laptops, tablets and smart phones while they are on the go. It's an integral part of modern life.

The basic human need to socialise has been further facilitated by the internet as social media sites were born. They have had a seismic effect on the ability of ordinary individuals to communicate both words and pictures instantly to the whole planet in seconds. Friends on separate continents can keep up to date with each other's news and pictures, in real-time, 24/7.

Say hello to Facebook, Twitter, Blogging, Flickr, Wordpress and dozens of other social media sites!



5 TOP REASONS TO CONNECT

1. It's simple and it's free to use.

Using social media costs nothing. You don't incur any printing costs for leaflets and you can do it from the comfort of your home, rather than being out in the elements, posting leaflets through doors.

2. It communicates effectively.

You can develop a diverse following of constituents, the movers and shakers in your community, local associations and the press – all of whom can pick up on your internet postings.

3. It's a two way street.

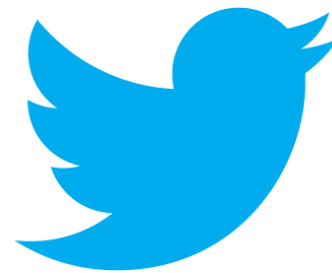
You get immediate feedback on your plans or manifesto and can react accordingly. You also get another channel to keep in touch with community developments, by following local associations and learning about their plans or views.

4. Personal connection with different types of residents.

Not everyone can get along to Council meetings or attend your surgeries. Others may be carers, parents of young children, live in a remote location or are disabled and unable to get out of the house at will. This is *your* chance to reach them. Generally, people who interact with you on-line perceive this as a more personal interaction than simply reading a flyer or leaflet.

5. Conversations are *already* happening without you - so get involved!

Your constituents are *already* using social media to talk about local issues. They're not waiting for you. This is *your* opportunity to join the discussion and *demonstrably* get involved. Be part of things, rather than getting left out!



TWITTER

We've all heard the saying "a little birdie told me". The *Twitter* social media site brings that saying to life!

So what is "*Twitter*"? In essence it's a website that allows millions of its worldwide account-users to broadcast and share short pieces of information to each other in no more than 140 characters, including letters, numbers & spaces. Each message is called a *Tweet*.

It's like having millions of 'reporters' constantly out and about composing *Tweets*. *Twitter* first really came to prominence on 15th January 2009, when Captain Chesley Sullenberger was forced to skilfully land his stricken Airbus airliner on the River Hudson near Manhattan. None of his 150 passengers or crew on board lost their lives in an incident that became known as the "Miracle on the Hudson". The event was instantaneously in the news, as dozens of *Twitter* users nearby immediately *Tweeted* what they saw. News Agencies monitoring *Twitter* were immediately alerted to the story in seconds. It was at the time, the fastest reported major news story ever. *Twitter* had come of age.

Twitter has link buttons with its distinctive bluebird logo in lots of places. If you go on any internet news site, like BBC News, ITN, Sky News etc, there'll be a *Twitter* button next to the story. This button allows *Twitter* users to send a link of the story through their *Twitter* account, just by clicking on the *Twitter* logo. You can also send a link of any other interesting website through *Twitter* by *Tweeting* its link. **Remember** however, that unlike emails, *Tweets* and other social media posts are a public broadcast, **not** a private means of communication.

Getting a *Twitter* account is easy and it's free. Just visit www.twitter.com and spend two or three minutes setting up your account, by registering as a user. If you want to be racy, you can even personalise the look of your account with colour-schemes and add a photo of yourself in a few mouse-clicks. You will be known by your chosen name prefixed by @ (for example "@excelsa_interim") Then start *Tweeting*! *Twitter* will automatically suggest other users for you to "follow" or you can enter a person's name, your Town's name, local interest etc prefixed by a "hashtag" symbol to generically search for people to follow (e.g. #burnley). "Following" means that when those you follow *Tweet*, you get it sent to you and vice versa.



FACEBOOK

Founded by Harvard University student Mark Zuckerberg in 2004, *Facebook* and has rapidly grown to be the largest and most successful social media website in the world, with over 1 Billion users - 33 Million of whom are in the UK.

Individuals, groups, associations, government bodies, companies, politicians, restaurants and sports venues are among those who regard *Facebook* as an invaluable tool to communicate with the public.

Why? Because it's free, it's current, it's easy, it's instant, it's interactive and more than a half of the UK population use *Facebook* as an integral part of their lifestyle. It gets messages across in the way that the majority of the population prefer to receive communications.

Getting started is easy. Just visit www.facebook.com and sign-up. It takes just a few minutes and it's free. You get your own *Facebook* page, which you use as your own mini-website. You can add as much or as little information about yourself as you like. You can add photos, background banners and so forth to individualise your page. As its immense popularity demonstrates - It's very user-friendly and the registration process goes step-by-step. Once you've registered, *Facebook* can automatically trawl your email contacts to find people you know, who already have Facebook accounts. You can then invite them to be your *Facebook* "friends". You can also use the search function at the top of the *Facebook* page to locate other users to connect with, such as entering the names of businesses, individuals, shops and associations that operate in your ward and then either click to "like" them or invite to be "friends".

You can then just post messages on *Facebook* from your laptop, tablet or smartphone. Your posts will be instantly seen by your "friends" and anyone who had "liked" your page. You may write as much or as little as you like in each post. There is *no* 140 character limit as on Twitter.

Facebook has privacy settings enabling you to allow your contacts to add comments to your posts, which is great for developing a dialogue or a discussion-thread on your page. The privacy settings also allow you to block any *Facebook* users you choose from either communicating with you, or adding comments to your page.

Alternatives to Facebook, which work in a similar manner, include MySpace and Bebo.



BLOGGING

Dr Samuel Pepys was perhaps one of the best known diarists in British History. His diary entries captured not just the detail of his daily routine, but his thoughts on the society in which he lived.

Many of us will either ourselves keep, or know a family member who keeps a diary journal.

Blogging is just like an on-line journal which allows other internet users to read the *Blogger's* thoughts and views expressed in their *Blog*. *Blogging* can be a useful way for Councillors to develop detailed on-going commentary on topics of local or national interest.

Blogging also allows Councillors to quickly publish articles on their *Blog*.

Blogging is therefore a useful platform to publish longer articles or maintain a daily journal. *Blogging* differs from the so called 'micro-blogging' of Twitter's 140 character limit, as generally there is no limit to the number of words that comprise a *Blog* entry.

As with other social media, it is very simple to set up a *Blog* and it can be done in just a few minutes. Indeed, many niche websites have a complimentary *blogging* function for their members – for example the Knowledge Hub website for local government www.knowledgehub.local.gov.uk caters to those in the local government community, but tends only to be read within that public sector.

If you propose to use a *Blog* to communicate more widely than to a niche area of interest, you'll need to set up a *Blog* on a mainstream Social Media blogging site. Mainstream *Blogging* sites include:

www.wordpress.com

www.blogger.com

www.simplesite.com

Most *Blog* sites allow you to add "tags" to every entry. Tags are optional key-words which you think will help other internet users find your *Blog*. A *Blog* about the threatened closure of your local swimming pool for example might have "swimming pool", "closure" and "petition" added as *tags* along with the name of the pool or its location.



LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is a sort of specialist Facebook-type website for business people, professionals and managers.

It may not have the mass popular appeal as other types of social media, but is nevertheless seen as highly influential. It allows business people to share views, news and best practice. It currently has around 200 Million users, of which 11 Million are in the UK.

It works rather like Facebook, in that members form networks of 'connections' (rather than 'friends' on Facebook) on the basis of shared business and professional interests, rather than social pursuits. You should tap into *LinkedIn* – and see what local business is saying.

As with all other social media, the steps to join are fairly predictable. You just visit www.linkedin.com and sign up for free. As with all other social media, you need to create a profile and then add as much or as little information as you like.

As one might expect, the emphasis on *LinkedIn*, is for profiles to be developed around business skills and business interests, together with academic, community and corporate achievements.

Many head-hunters and recruitment specialists use *LinkedIn* as an essential tool to reach those whom they seek to hire.

Very many local authority Chief Executives and senior officers have *LinkedIn* accounts as do numerous elected members.

As with many social media sites, there is an opportunity to set your account preferences, so that any post you make to *LinkedIn* is automatically duplicated on your designated Twitter, Facebook or similar accounts.

Remember – the more times your posts appear on the internet, the more it is likely that they will figure in internet search engine results!

Like the children's game of "cat's cradle" the more strands you have on the internet, the better connected you will be and the easier you will be for search engines to find you.



PICTURES & VIDEO

I was given a Super 8 cine camera for my 15th Birthday and a 35mm SLR camera as my Christmas gift that year. As a result, I've always enjoyed taking photos and making holiday movies. I suppose that I was in the fortunate minority way back in the 1970's.

As times changed, I've constantly upgraded my kit, to my current digital camera, which both makes videos and takes very clear photographs – although my mobile phone incorporates basic versions of each of these functions. Taking good photos and making home videos is no longer the preserve of enthusiasts. There are millions of such mobile phones in the UK.

Have you noticed that these days, whenever there is a major news story – perhaps a plane crash, armed robbery or heroic rescue, that there is always some shaky film footage that emerges within hours?

We are surrounded by CCTV cameras and people with camera-equipped mobile phones.

YouTube (www.youtube.com) is one of a number of dedicated websites that allow everyone to easily upload videos to the internet. Some of these videos attract huge audiences and are said to “go viral,” attracting enormous publicity. For example, when aspiring singer, Susan Boyle made her first appearance on TV talent show “Britain’s Got Talent” in 1999, *YouTube* viewings of both her audition and interviews topped 100 million in just a few days. It’s by no accident therefore that her debut album holds the record as the fastest selling UK album of all time.

Flickr (www.flickr.com) does the same sort of thing for still photos. Both websites facilitate the images having descriptive words called “tags” being attached for easy location by search engines. I am not suggesting that Councillors make DIY election broadcasts and post them on *YouTube*, or put portfolios of glamorous pictures on *Flickr*.

The Point is that Elected Members should recognise the importance of both social media and the fact that pictures speak a thousand words. Local newspaper reporters with cameras can't be everywhere. If you are called to open an event, award a prize or attend a scene of topical interest – either you or your colleagues can photographically record your attendance and instantly post it to Facebook, Twitter, a Blog, *Flickr* or *YouTube*.

It's not just a case of working hard for your community – it's also *communicating* that fact.



YOUR OWN WEBSITE?

With so very many easier alternatives available, such as Facebook, Twitter & Blogging, setting up your own *website* may seem like a step too far for many Councillors. Indeed, not that long ago, the average person requiring their own website would enlist the services of a specialist company to do the work for them. Nowadays, you can register ownership of a 'domain' (which basically means a web-site name ending with .com / .co.uk / .org.uk etc) and populate it with your own simple and attractive DIY *website* in a few easy steps, taking 15 minutes or less. This however is generally a step for more **advanced** internet users, who have mastered the simpler techniques of Facebook, Twitter and Blogging.

Owning your own *website* gives you total control over the design, size, look and feel of your web presence, allowing you to create a unique environment for your internet visitors.

Step 1

Visit one of the many *website* making services (such as www.123-reg.co.uk etc) and in the 'make a *website*' section, select a package and enter your chosen *website* name. The service will respond offering you those variants which are available. For example if you want your *website* called *John Doe*, the *website* making service might offer you several alternative styles (known as 'domains') for you to choose from what's available – such as *john doe.com*, *john doe.org.uk* etc. You then select one and acquire the right to use that domain for a period of years, on payment of a fee, which is usually collected monthly.

Step 2

Having acquired your *website* domain name, the *website* making service usually allow you to use their free *website* creation tools to finish the job. You'll be walked, step-by-step, through the process - selecting a colour background, how many pages you might want to create and adding your own photographs or text to those pages.

Step 3

Once you're happy with your draft *website*, you simply press a "publish" button and your *website* becomes potentially visible to the whole world!

However, you must bear in mind that to make your *website* widely visible may take a while and relies on search engines both indexing and ranking your *website* (see the next section).



I'M OVER HERE →

The internet is like a giant library of internet addresses, services, words and phrases. The major 'search engines' that allow internet users to find things (Google, Yahoo, Bing etc) recognise the different types of websites and index them, by way of their name, popularity, content and key-words. You can set-up your Facebook account, Twitter account, Blog or Website in minutes. But how do you tell other internet users where to find you?

Let's say that you went into a library and were looking for Agatha Christie's novel "Murder on The Orient Express". Where would you look? If your search method was just to walk along every shelf, checking the title of every book, you'd be looking for a very, very long time. If however, you went straight to the *fiction* shelves, then found *crime fiction* and looked for authors whose surnames began with "C", your search would be both efficient and quick, because the book will be properly indexed and your search method logical. Internet search engines work in a similar way, although the precise manner in which they search is a closely guarded secret. Generally, search engines look for the occurrence of key-words and 'tags' (such as those 'tags' that Blogging sites allow you to add as an option). So, if you write a Blog article about the walks of the Snowdonia National Park, you should *not* call the article "A Splendid Afternoon Out". Instead you should call it "Walks in Snowdonia National Park" and add suitable tags to emphasise key-words within the piece, such as "Snowdonia", "mountains", "national park", "Wales", "walking tour" etc. Get yourself found!

If you choose to have more than one Social Media Account, then just use the "cut and paste" facility of your computer to duplicate your work onto both Facebook and your Blog without having to re-write it. Don't stop there. Why not go the whole hog and emphasise your posts by Tweeting links to them on your Twitter account? A few minutes effort and your words will be published on several internet sites at once. Remember that generally the more exposure you get on the internet, the easier it will be for search engines like Google to find you and the more efficient your communications will be. Similarly, if you do write a letter to a local Newspaper, remember to add your social media account details close to your signature. Make sure that it's also on your personal stationery and your pro-forma e-mail signature. Tell people that you're using social media. Seek Facebook *friends*, LinkedIn *connections* and Twitter *followers*. Spread the word!

WORKSHOP EXERCISE 2

Part 1

Without referring to earlier pages, circle which of the following you think is the correct answer.

1. **Blogging is like an internet version of:**

Betting	Journal Diary	Sharing Photos	Sharing Video	Banking
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2. **When using Twitter, the maximum number of characters per Tweet is:**

100	120	140	150	Unlimited
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3. **Approximately how many Facebook users are there currently in the UK?**

500,000	1 million	23 million	33 million	62 million
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4. **According to the UK Census of 2011, how many adults are there in the UK?**

10 million	33 million	38 million	48 million	62 million
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Part 2

Without referring to earlier pages, see if you can identify the following social media sites from their logos



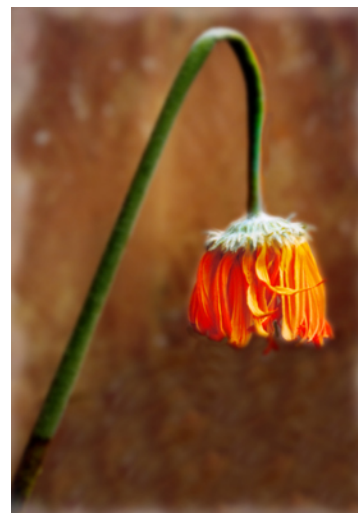
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FEEDING & NURTURING

If we're honest, we've all done it. We've all bought a pot plant, which we diligently look after for a while. We water it and look after it daily. Then after a week or so, we attend to it less frequently and in a month we see a withered and sad specimen that ends up on the compost heap.

It's a bit like New Year's resolutions. We all earnestly give up chocolate, wine or cream cakes on the 1st January, but tend to relax our discipline in a week or so.

Web-presence is a bit like owning that pot plant. Whether you elect to set up one, two or three social media accounts, the secret to success is to look after them on a regular, if not daily basis. They need feeding to keep them healthy.

Remember – the more you use social media, the higher rated your on-line profile is likely to be and the easier it will become for internet users to find your communications.

Imagine however visiting your own Councillor's website, Facebook page or Blog, to note that their most recent musings were of a visit to a School Nativity Play in 2009.

What does that tell you about them?

It's not like the secret shame of the poorly kept pot plant or the discreet indulgence of a cream cake or two. It's a very public indictment of a Member who at best is paying lip-service to social media, or at worst, seems out of touch.

Social media is a serious undertaking. Used properly as an integrated part of a Member's work, it will reap huge benefits.

Used sporadically or irresponsibly and it can have negative effects.



FREE SPEECH?

It is often stated that we live in a Country where we enjoy free speech.

Of course that is not the case, as total freedom of speech can be a dangerous concept. Instead, we live in a society where freedom of speech is subject to sensible restraints and safeguards.

For example, my freedom of speech is properly curtailed from allowing me to shout abuse through a megaphone at my neighbours by day and night. That would be harassment and likely constitute both a private and a public nuisance.

Similarly, I could not walk around a town carrying a placard falsely declaring that the local dentist was unqualified. That would be defamatory.

Equally tax inspectors cannot divulge your personal financial details, nor can bankers disclose your bank balance, or members of the armed forces openly discuss the country's defence capability or people make racist remarks.

We have the Official Secrets Act, the Equalities Act, the Protection from Harassment Act and the Data Protection Act, among many other enactments to ensure that what people can lawfully say is properly controlled.

Freedoms come with responsibilities.

The technology we have at our disposal today, means that criminal offences can be committed and civil liability incurred while we tap away at laptops, tablets or smart phones from the otherwise warm comfort of our homes.

When you choose to publish views on Social Media, it is a *publication*. The moment you press the 'send' / 'tweet' / 'publish' / 'share' or similar button, your words are in the **public** domain and you are liable for any code of conduct, civil or criminal consequences of your message, article or posting.

To modernise an old saying - "post in haste – repent at leisure".

It is imperative therefore that you use social media responsibly in accordance with both the Law and also your Code of Conduct.



LEGAL LIABILITY

Criminal Offences

We will all remember the recent celebrated cases of people who have fallen foul of the law by using social media irresponsibly and illegally. In recent years prison sentences have been handed down to those inciting riots or making racist remarks on social media.

A number of considerations must be carefully applied. For example, to repeatedly pursue a campaign against a person on-line may amount to a criminal offence, contrary to the provisions of the Section 2 of The Protection from Harassment Act, if that course of conduct is likely to cause alarm, harassment, nuisance or distress. Equally, it is illegal to make discriminatory comments, threats of any type on-line or send anything which can amount to a malicious or obscene communication.

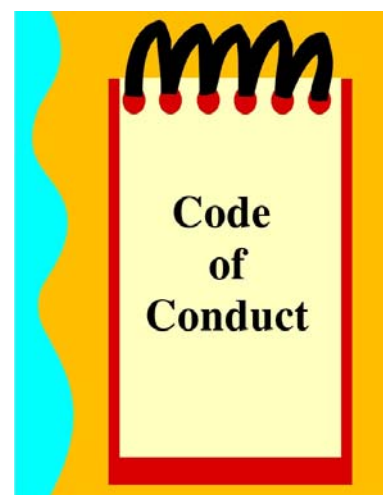
Care must be taken not to disclose confidential information, particularly personal data relating to third parties, which is protected by the Data Protection Act.

Civil Liability

The law of defamation applies to any publication, including on-line postings. Where publication of a false statement causes injury to the reputation of a third party, they can claim very substantial damages from the maker of that statement. This applies even if you simply replicate, copy, or Re-Tweet a defamatory remark or statement originally made by someone else.

You should not put any copyright-protected material (photos, video etc) on your internet postings without the prior written consent of the copyright owner.

It is unlikely that your Authority will offer you indemnity for any such claims that may be made. Members should check the stance of their own Council with regard to indemnities, by enquiring of their Monitoring Officer.



CODE OF CONDUCT

All Councillors will have to sign-up to their Council's Code of Conduct. Their Code is designed to promote and ensure the highest possible standards of behaviour in public life. Codes of Conduct usually apply whenever Councillors act in their official capacity or give the *impression* that they are acting in that capacity.

It is generally useful for Councillors to have a separate and *dedicated* Facebook, Twitter, Blog or Website as their 'official' web-presence. Their profile on that 'official' web-presence will have their Councillor title, ward name and other details clearly showing that it is designed as a communication channel for their ward or political work. Councillors might choose to have a secondary account, purely for their social & family pursuits. This avoids any possible confusion or ambiguity.

In the context of the use of social media, Councillors need to particularly ensure that when making postings to their 'official' Blogs, Websites or other on-line resources that they abide by their Code of Conduct and do not bring either their office or their Authority into disrepute. They must therefore:

- Show respect for others
- Not disclose confidential information in their possession
- Not bully or harass others
- Not try to secure a benefit for themselves or a disadvantage for others
- Remain mindful of the legal requirements for ethnic, religious and other equalities

A breach of the Code of Conduct *on line* is as much of a breach as if it were committed in *any* other forum where a Councillor acts in their official capacity.

NOTE: Legal liabilities and your Code of Conduct are not mutually exclusive of each other. A Councillor, who is prosecuted or sued for misbehaviour on line, may *also* find separate action being taken against them by their Council for breach of their Code of Conduct.

WORKSHOP EXERCISE 3

SCENARIO

Both you and Cllr Ned Farmer-Giles are members of Green Hills Council.

Green Hills Council has adopted a model Code of Conduct for Councillors in usual form, which all members have signed.

You are a Facebook friend of Cllr Farmer-Giles and have just read the exchange reproduced on the panel to the right, between your fellow Councillor and Mr John Slye, the Managing Director of a local construction company. This exchange took place an hour ago.

TASK

What is your overview of the exchange?

What issues do you think are likely to arise?

How could Cllr Farmer-Giles have acted differently?

CLLR NED FARMER-GILES - I am so looking forward to opening the village fête on the weekend.

JOHN SLYE: I bet you are, so that you can feed your fat-face with cakes.

CLLR NED FARMER-GILES: Why don't you just b****r off and get a life.

JOHN SLYE: That's very rude. Apologise at once.

CLLR NED FARMER-GILES: I have no intention of apologising. You're a sore loser, just because you didn't win the tender to build the new Town Hall. £15 million! Ha Ha you must be off your swindling crooked trolley!

JOHN SLYE: How dare you disclose that information. I insist that you apologise.

CLLR NED FARMER-GILES: I certainly won't apologise. You're Slye by name and sly by nature.

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