

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Standards Committee – 16 March 2023
Subject: Social Media Guidance for Members update
Report of: City Solicitor

Summary

To update the Committee on the operation and efficacy of the Social Media Guidance for Members ('the Guidance').

Recommendation

That the Committee note the report.

Wards Affected All

Contact Officers:

Name: Fiona Ledden
Position: City Solicitor
Telephone: 0161 234 3087
Email: fiona.ledden@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Poornima Karkera
Position: Head of Governance Legal Services.
Telephone: 0161 234 3719
E-mail: poornima.karkera@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Committee last received a report on the operation and efficacy of the Social Media Guidance for Members ('the Guidance') at its meeting in March 2022. Social Media Guidance is, as members will be aware, covered in the first Induction Session with new members and new members are given a copy of the Social Media Guidance following Induction.
- 1.2 In respect of sharing the Council's Social Media Guidance for Members with candidates, the committee will recall that the March 2022 report confirmed that the Returning Officer (the separate statutory office holder responsible for the delivery of elections and independent from the Council) does not provide guidance to candidates on campaigning matters or on conduct should candidates be elected. Guidance on campaigning matters is provided by the Electoral Commission and shared with candidates and agents by the Returning Officer's staff. In the circumstances inclusion of the Council's Social Media Guidance for Members in the candidates' briefing pack was not considered appropriate and is not proposed.
- 1.3 On review in 2022 it was not considered that further revision of the Guidance was required. A copy of the Guidance is contained in the Appendix to this report. It is not considered that further amendments other than to refresh the review date are required to the Guidance at this stage.

2. Operation of the Guidance

- 2.1 In terms of the operation of the Guidance there were 17 complaints relating to Manchester City Councillors between 1 February 2022 and 31 January 2023. 2 of these complaints related to Social Media use. One of these complaints was outside of the scope of the member complaints procedure as the subject member was not acting in an official capacity. The other was rejected at Stage 1 initial assessment because the Monitoring Officer following consultation with the Council's Independent Person considered there was no clear information leading to the implication there was a breach of the code of conduct for members and that in the circumstances there was no overriding public benefit in carrying out an investigation.
- 2.2 In the circumstances use of social media by Members is not presently considered to be of particular current concern. However as this is an area where care is needed a further copy of the Social Media Guidance will be sent to all Members again shortly.

3. Recommendation

That the Committee note the report.