

STANDARDS COMMITTEE – AGENDA ITEM 5 - SOCIAL MEDIA PROTOCOL

The draft protocol was circulated to all councillors and we received responses from 3 councillors which are detailed below.

Councillor 1

“ I have 1,700 followers on Twitter more than other councillors in Cheltenham and possibly Gloucestershire. Having that number of followers I must be doing something right or they would find my tweets boring and irrelevant and unfollow me.

What steps has the working group undertaken to speak with Councillors who use Twitter and other forms of social media very effectively? I don't recall being asked for my views, who are the councillors that came up with this draft and what experience do they have of Twitter etc?

What about freedom of speech? The length and tone of this document is Kafka esq and makes me seriously believe the council is trying to stifle the ability of members to use their own judgement on how to use social media.

If we have to have guidance two A4 sides should be more than adequate - if needs be put a link to the relevant constitution bits rather than add them and other things repeatedly.”

The councillor was particularly concerned about the phrase “Councillors should think carefully before posting anything on social media when angry, tired or having consumed alcohol”. Overall they felt the document was repetitive and a bit patronising.

Councillor 2

First, who decides what is in 'the public interest'? The phrase runs through the document, but without clarification.

Secondly, non-disclosure to a third party is problematic potentially. For example, if a matter comes to me about which I feel the need to take private legal advice and my legal advisor decides they must disclose it to the competent authority or to the police, would that be in breach of this? My reading of the relevant section indicates that it might!

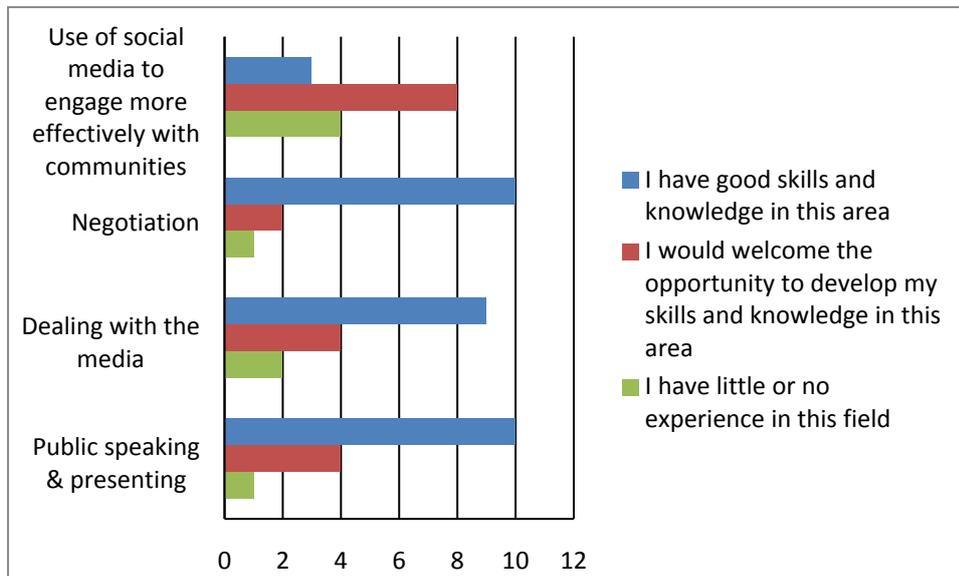
Councillor 3

“I guess my main comment is whether this really warrants being a formal 'protocol' for cllrs? All the principles behind the advice it contains are already covered in the code of conduct etc. and I'm not sure that simply because something is classed as 'social media' that it should require people to act any differently than they should in any other form of communication or interaction with other people.

It could perhaps instead be the basis for a useful 'introduction to' type guide or maybe training session as there are a number of councillors who are presumably interested in twitter etc. but may benefit from advice on how to get more out of it.”

Results of the Members Skills Audit 2014 (15 members responded)

Communication



Most members were confident with their communication skills with the exception of social media. A few members are confident users of social media, using it every day. In comments, members mentioned having acquired these skills either from their outside employment or during their time in office. Some of the less experienced members were also interested in developing their public speaking and media skills.