YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY **ITEM 8**

Date: **12 December 2023**

Report **SOCIAL MEDIA PROTOCOL FOR MEMBERS**

Purpose of the report

1. To seek Members views on proposed revisions to the Social Media Protocol for Members ("Protocol") in the **Appendix**.

RECOMMENDATION

2. To adopt the revised Protocol.

Strategic Planning Framework

3. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:

   Corporate Plan
   Objective 32: Operate governance arrangements that are fit for purpose as reported through the Annual Governance Statement and the Annual Governance Report.

Background

4. Social media is at the heart of the Authority's communication and interaction with audiences. The current Social Media Strategy and Social Media Guide was approved by the Authority in December 2021. Since then, the Authority's channels have continued to grow.

5. The social media landscape is changing at pace and therefore the Authority's Communications Manager commissioned a specialist review of the Authority's Social Media from a public sector communications specialist. The outcome of that review is being presented to Authority on 12 December 2023 (Item 7) together with an updated Social Media Strategy and Guide for adoption, which incorporate recommendations from the review.

6. The current Protocol was adopted in March 2020 and is intended as guidance for those Members who use social media or would like to use social media to help them (and as a consequence the Authority) avoid legal and reputational risk.

7. The Communications Manager has reviewed the Protocol in light of the proposed changes to the Social Media Strategy and Guide and has updated the Protocol in line with those changes.

Summary of proposed changes

8. There have been no significant changes to the content of the Protocol as the basic principles remain unchanged. Proposed changes are therefore to reflect the different means of social media, its changing pace and the way in which it is used. The changes are highlighted.

Standards Committee Views

9. The Protocol was considered by the Standards Committee at its meeting on 5 December 2023. Due to the print deadline for Authority papers it has not been possible to include feedback from Standards Committee in this report, however, the Monitoring Officer will provide Members with a verbal update at the Authority meeting.

Conclusion

10. That the revised Protocol is adopted.

Clare Burrows
Director of Corporate Services

20 November 2023

Appendix

Do's and Don'ts when using Social Media

Do:

- be responsible and respectful at all times.
- set appropriate privacy settings for your social media channels.
- keep an eye out for defamatory or obscene posts from others on your social media and remove them as soon as possible to avoid the perception that you condone such views.
- be aware that the higher your profile as a Member, the more likely it is you will be seen as acting in your official capacity when you post on social media.
- ensure you use Authority facilities appropriately; if you contribute to an Authority blog or social media post, any comments you make will be viewed as being made in your official capacity.
- be aware that you will be seen as acting in your official capacity if you publish information that you could only have accessed or be perceived to only have accessed by being a Member of the Authority.
- feel able to make political points but be careful about being too specific or personal if referring to individuals. An attack on an individual may be seen as disrespectful, whereas general comments about another party or genuine comments on policy are less likely to be viewed as disrespectful.

Don't:

- Post in haste, particularly in circumstances where your judgement might be impaired.
- make unguarded statements which could lead to potential liability.
- post comments that you would not be prepared to make on paper or face to face.
- use Authority facilities for personal or political posts.
- request or accept a contractor providing services to the Authority as a "friend" on a social networking site where this suggests close personal association. For the avoidance of doubt, this does not apply to sites which are intended as a neutral, professional connections registry (such as LinkedIn).
- use social media in any way to attack, insult, abuse, defame or otherwise make negative, offensive or discriminatory comments about members of the public, Authority staff, their family or friends, colleagues, other professionals, other organisations, or the Authority.
- publish confidential information that you may have learned or had access to as part of your role as member of the Authority. This includes personal information about contractors, Authority officers as well as Authority related information.
- represent your personal views, or those of any political party or interest group you belong to, as being those of the Authority, on any social medium.
- browse, download, upload or distribute any material that could be considered defamatory, illegal or discriminatory.
- make conspicuous, excessive and continuous use of social media technology during the course of an Authority meeting or committee meeting so that you give the impression to the public of not being respectful of the proceedings and, more seriously, taking decisions that are not based on full engagement with the facts and arguments.

This Protocol was approved by the Standards Committee on 5 December 2023 and adopted by the Authority on 12 December 2023. It is due for review in December 2028.

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