

# **The London Borough of Harrow**

## **Website facilities for Councillors**

### **Acceptable Use Protocol**

#### **Protocol for Councillors writing information and/or including material on Internet web pages, logs or blogs.**

Councillors are only permitted to publish information in their blog in the context of their official role; content should be fact based and deal with matters of general public interest.

Councillors should not include any content that is prejudicial to the operation of the Council or that will bring the Council, Elected Members or Council Officers into disrepute.

Councillors accept that the Council will include a disclaimer page in relation to Councillor blogs on the main Council website in an effort to limit any liability associated with being the host publisher. Councillors are advised to read the disclaimer page.

Councillor blogs should be used with due regard to the Members' Code of Conduct. Councillors may be liable to the sanctions associated with a breach of the Code if they are adjudged to have contravened this protocol.

Sites will be monitored by Council Officers to ensure that they are only being used for appropriate purposes and in accordance with the protocol. The Council reserves the right to remove any statement or material that it feels is in contravention of the protocol. The Council can withdraw permission for a blog at any time if it is adjudged that a Councillor has acted outside the protocol or contrary to the Members Code of Conduct.

Councillors are allowed to provide the following details on their pages:

- a) A photograph.
- b) Their contact details.
- c) Any position they hold in the Council and the associated responsibilities.
- d) Information about their surgeries.
- e) Information about their individual proposals, decisions and recommendations only where this is relevant to their position and responsibilities within the Council. All such information should be objective and explanatory; the personalisation of issues should be avoided and such information should not be stated in party political terms.
- f) Councillors are allowed to use their 'My Politics' section of their blog to link to external political websites.

#### **Councillors agree to abide by the following provisions:**

1. Councillors must not publish defamatory statements or material, and their pages should not contain negative references to any named or identifiable individual, product, event or company.
2. Councillors must reference any sources they use in full and attribute any quotes/material to the author/creator.
  - a) Councillors agree to either obtain permission from the owner of copyright material or reasonably acknowledge copyright material so that is easily identifiable as re-produced material.

- b) Councillors must not infringe Newspaper Licensing Agency Copyrights by publishing press articles or press photographs without permission from the publication.
3. Councillors agree to abide by data protection legislation.
- a) Councillors must not disclose personal information provided to them without first obtaining the consent of the subject.
  - b) Councillors must not pass personal information onto a third party without the consent of the subject.
  - c) Councillors must only use personal information for the purpose for which it was provided.
  - d) Councillors will only hold personal information for a reasonable period and will then destroy any material in such a way as to render it unidentifiable.
  - e) No names, addresses or contact details should be printed on the page without the express permission of the relevant owner/person.
  - f) Photographs must not be published on the site without the permission of all those featured. Councillors should refrain from publishing pictures of children unless the permission of both parents has been gained and there is a valid reason for the publication.
3. Councillors agree to avoid unnecessary or negative comment on the following subject areas as comment on these areas may be considered offensive:
- a) Religion;
  - b) Race;
  - c) Gender;
  - d) Sexual Orientation;
  - e) Age;
  - f) Disability;
  - g) Terrorism;
  - h) Sexual activity.
- 4) Councillors should not use their pages for political purposes and agree to abide by the terms set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity (contained in Part 5 of the Constitution).
- a) Councillors should not use their pages to promote political campaigns or events.
  - b) Councillors should not use their pages to make political comments, state political slogans or expressly advocate the politics of their political party.
  - c) Councillors should not use their pages to attack the policies of their own or other political parties.
  - d) Councillors should not attack the opinions of members of their own or other political parties or include any personal reference that could be negatively construed.
  - e) Councillors who sit on quasi-judicial committees should not state information on their pages about matters that have been or that they have notice will be on the committee agenda. Councillors who hold such positions should be mindful at all times that they need to avoid any accusations of bias or pre-determination.
  - f) Six weeks prior to Council elections Councillors agree to remove all content from their pages save for the Council's main website address.
- 5) Councillors should avoid publishing:
- a) Any content that promotes their own financial interests.
  - b) Details of any commercial ventures owned by them or their family/friends.
  - c) Any named or identifiable products or services.

- d) Any events that have corporate sponsors unless it is in the public interest to publish details of such an event and the sponsor's role is not promoted but merely referenced.
- 6) Councillors agree not to include any live chat rooms or interactive feedback pages on their pages, unless they are able to monitor the content of the aforementioned types of pages on a daily basis and remove any inappropriate comments.
- 7) Councillors should be wary about including links to other websites on their site as content on other sites may change rapidly and contain material or statements that contravene this protocol or the Members Code of Conduct. Councillors should regularly check the contents of linked sites including any adverts and/or chat pages.

Council Officers may monitor the content of Councillor blogs.

If Councillors have any queries about the suitability of any content they are considering for their website they should proceed with caution and not publish the material until they have contacted Legal who will proffer advice.

b) The Council has the right to discontinue any site that is not being updated regularly or that has been inactive for longer than 6 months. This does not include inactivity during elections when content is restricted to the Council's main website address.

I ..... agree to abide by this Protocol, and accept full responsibility for the content of my site

Signed.....

Dated...