

Subject:	Social Media Protocol for Members and Social Networking Policy for Employees		
Date of Meeting:	Audit and Standards Committee 16th April 2013		
Report of:	Head of Law and Monitoring Officer		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis	Tel: 291500
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE.

Note: The special circumstances for non-compliance with Council Procedure Rule 3, Access to Information Procedure Rule 5 and Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (items not considered unless the agenda is open to inspection at least five days in advance of the meeting) were that while it was necessary to make progress on the implementation of the decisions taken by the committee at their meeting of 22/1/13, it was also necessary to consult on this report and appendices at the recent meetings of the Informal Chairs and the Standards Working Group.

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to bring to the Audit & Standards Committee a protocol on the use of social media by members and a social networking policy for employees which have been drafted following the decisions the Committee took at its meeting on 22nd January 2013.
- 1.2 Those decisions were taken with the intention of improving the way the council manages confidential information.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee approves the Social Media Protocol for Members at Appendix 1.1 to this report.
- 2.2 That the committee approves the Social Networking Policy for Employees at Appendix 1.2 to this report.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 At its meeting on the 22nd January 2013, the Audit and Standards Committee received a report referring to an investigation that had been carried out by the Monitoring Officer. This investigation took place following a series of unauthorised disclosures of confidential information.
- 3.2 The report asked members to note that the investigation, supplemented by an informal peer review carried out by Southampton City Council, had identified that

the fundamental issue was the council's organisational culture. This culture was seen to shape and influence Member and Officer expectations and behaviour.

- 3.3 The recommendations, which were accepted by the members, focused on this aspect. The members agreed in principle that the wide range of action points detailed in the appendix to the report, which were aimed at improving the council's management of confidential information, should be implemented.
- 3.4 As a part of the recommendation on adopting this broad approach, the report stated that there were a number of policies, procedures and protocols on ways of working that needed to be looked at and updated.
- 3.5 The Audit and Standards Committee members on 22nd January 2013 also accepted a recommendation regarding these documents. They agreed that proposed new protocols and suggested revisions to the various existing codes and protocols should be submitted to them for approval.
- 3.6 The proposed versions of two of these documents – a Social Media Protocol for Members (new) and a Social Networking Policy for Employees (based on an existing informal guidance document) - are attached at Appendices 1.1 and 1.2 respectively.

4. ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Prior to accepting the recommendations of the report taken to their meeting of 22nd January 2013, members had noted that the outcome of the investigation and recommended actions were taken to the Leaders Group on 7th January 2013 for consideration. The proposed actions and implementation schedule were endorsed there.
- 4.2 Detailed consultation with Human Resources, Communications and ICT has taken place on the content of the Social Media Protocol for Elected Members and the Social Networking Policy for Employees.
- 4.3 Consultation has also recently taken place on these two documents at the Informal Chairs meeting and the Standards Working Group.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The proposed actions set out involve changes to working practices, codes, protocols and culture, all of which are expected to be achieved within existing departmental revenue budgets.

Finance Officer Consulted: Anne Silley Date: 26/03/13

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 None other than that set out at paragraph 1.2 of the Summary above; the council has a duty to ensure that it has appropriate arrangements in place to ensure that those parts of its business which are confidential remain confidential.

Lawyer Consulted: Andy Couper

date: 05/04/13

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 There are no equalities implications arising from the report.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 There are no sustainability implications arising from the report.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from the report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The adoption of appropriate protocols and policies following the investigation will set a framework for improvement to the council's corporate governance. Observance of these documents will lessen the risk of unauthorised disclosure of confidential information.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 The attached documents, among other things, give direction on dealing with information that is confidential and must remain confidential. Compliance with them should, along with implementation of the other actions agreed by members at their meeting in January, help to promote an increase in security as well as properly managed openness and transparency at the council.

6. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Acceptance of the recommendations and adoption of the Code and Policy will represent a continued implementation of the broader decisions the committee took on improving the way the council manages confidential information at its meeting on 22/1/13.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

- 1.1 Social Media Protocol For Members
- 1.2 Social Networking Policy For Employees

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None