

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

LOCAL JOINT PANEL – 19 FEBRUARY 2013

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 20 MARCH 2013

CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER AND
COMMUNITY SERVICES

SOCIAL MEDIA USE POLICY

WARD(S) AFFECTED: N/A

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To establish a Council policy to provide clear guidance about the personal and business use (on behalf of the Council) of Social Media.

RECOMMENDATION FOR LOCAL JOINT PANEL: That:

(A)	The Social Media Use Policy presented be recommended for adoption.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE:
That:**

(A)	The Social Media Use Policy presented be adopted.
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1.0 Background

1.1 Social media opens up many new and exciting opportunities. The Council's Social Media Principles and Communications Strategy will ensure these are maximised for the Council. However, there are many potential issues to consider – as individuals outside work, as employees and as an organisation.

1.2 The Council has adopted a new Communications Strategy (Executive 10 July 2012) which includes a set of Social Media Principles, recognising the growing importance of social media as a communication and engagement tool.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 The Social Media Use Policy, Essential Reference Paper B, provides clear guidance about personal and business use (on behalf of the Council) of social media. This policy forms part of the Information Security Policy and links with the Council's other Information Communication Technology (ICT) User Policies and the Officer Code of Conduct, in particular the Disclosure of Information.
- 2.2 Any form of communication has the possibility of being misunderstood and social media is no more or no less vulnerable. The following laws apply with online participation of any kind:

- Data Protection Act 1998
- Defamation Act 1996
- Human rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988
- Regulatory and investigatory Powers Act 2000
- Telecommunications (Lawful Business Practice) (Interception of Communications) Regulations 2000

A Council Policy is therefore required to ensure all employees are supported in the use of social media in compliance with the above legal framework.

- 2.3 People post information on social media about all sorts of things, including, for instance, political opinions. In many cases, their username, their biographical details or their link to their website makes their offline identity traceable. Data Protection is therefore of particular importance and the Social Media Use Policy supports compliance with the Data Protection Act.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

- 3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

Social Media Policy Report to Corporate Management Team, 25/09/12
Report to Corporate Business Scrutiny 29/05/12 – Communications Strategy

Report to Executive 10/07/12 – Communications Strategy

Contact Member: Councillor Tony Jackson – Leader of the Council
tony.jackson@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer: Neil Sloper – Head of Customer Service and
Parking
01992 531611
neil.sloper@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author: Neil Sloper