



COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

INTERNET, SOCIAL MEDIA AND E-MAIL POLICY

REPORT BY HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To submit to the Council Executive for consideration, a revised council policy on the use of Internet, Social Media and E- Mail.

B. RECOMMENDATION

That the Council Executive approves the revised Internet, Social Media and E-Mail Policy appended to this report.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values

- Focusing on our customers' needs
- Being honest, open and accountable
- Providing equality of opportunities
- Making best use of our resources

II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)

The revised draft extends the current Policy on Internet and E-Mail to take account of the increasing use of Social Media. It also reaffirms the council's duties and obligations in relation to data protection, copyright, information security and equality legislation.

III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers

The revised policy details the roles and responsibilities of officers in ensuring effective implementation of its provisions.

IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators

The revised policy sets out expected standards of internet, social media and e-mail use consistent with delivering high levels of customer service delivery.

V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Supports employees in the day to day delivery of services necessary to achieve the single outcome agreement.
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	None
VII	Consideration at PDSP	The revised policy was considered by the Partnership and Resources PDSP on 8 June 2012.
VII	Other Consultations	Consultation has taken place with the recognised trade unions and other relevant stakeholders.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Background

The council's current Internet and E-Mail Policy was approved by the Council on 22 March 2005 with the aim of protecting the council and its employees from the misuse of Internet and E-Mail systems either inadvertently or otherwise.

A number of technological and legislative developments over recent years including the increasing use of social media applications and the greater focus on the management and security of information have prompted a review of the policy to ensure the council continues to be legally compliant.

D.2 Revised Policy

The revised Internet, Social Media and E-Mail Policy incorporates a number of additions and amendments in the following areas;

Information and Communication Applications

- Definition of and guidance on the use of Social Media.
- Expanded guidance on the use of Internet and E-Mail both for business, personal and private use (includes how an employee's use of the internet in their own time and on their own equipment can have implications for their contract of employment with the council).
- An expanded list of prohibited activities to take account of the increased use of Internet and E-Mail facilities (specifically Social Media)
- Clearer links to other relevant council policies and procedures such as the Information Security Policy.

Professional Standards in Business Use

- Emphasis on the need for professional standards of conduct to be observed in the use of all on line business communications, for example, in terms of the standards of e-mail language and style adopted in internal and external communications, particularly by employees registered with professional bodies such as Social Care & Social Work Improvement Scotland and the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)

Relevant Legislation

- Increased awareness of conduct that could expose employees and the council to legal liability and possible criminal proceedings
- Guidance on prevention of on line bullying, harassment and discriminatory conduct in line within the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 (eg. cyber-bullying)
- Implications of inappropriate online conduct for employees engaged in regulated work as defined by the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007.

D.3 CONSIDERATION AT PDSP

The revised Internet, Social Media and E-Mail Policy was considered at the Partnership & Resources PDSP on 8 June 2012. The committee noted the revised policy and agreed that the report be forwarded to the Council Executive for approval.

E. CONCLUSION

The revised policy reaffirms the obligation on employees to use Internet, Social Media and E-Mail systems effectively and responsibly in accordance with approved operational and security standards in the course of their work.

The policy also strengthens the council's position in dealing with the misuse of Internet, Social Media and E-Mail both within and out with the workplace to the extent it compromises the employee's contract of employment, impacts adversely on the council and its reputation and /or is in breach of council policy.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

- ACAS – Workplaces and Social Networking: Implications for Employment Relations
- Benchmarking Information – British Telecom (BT), HRMC and ACAS Social Media Policies

Appendix: Draft Internet, Social Media and E- Mail Policy

Contact Person: Fraser.Mackenzie@westlothian.gov.uk

Tel: 01506 281422

Graeme Struthers

Head of Corporate Services

Date: 25 June 2012