



## GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

18 July 2018

**Subject Heading:**

Members IT Usage and Social Media Protocols

**SLT Lead:**

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**Policy context:**

Business Systems policy

**Financial summary:**

There are no direct financial implications arising from the report

**The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives**

Communities making Havering  
Places making Havering  
Opportunities making Havering  
Connections making Havering

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### SUMMARY

At its meeting on 21 March 2018, Council approved a motion which called upon the Governance Committee to consider adoption of a protocol relating to email communications between members of the Council.

The purpose of this report is to recommend adoption of such a protocol which provides guidance and assistance on the appropriate use of Council IT in general, including email. A protocol encompassing the wider use of IT resources is also essential given the recent introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Furthermore, a protocol is also proposed in respect of the use of social media, which has become an increasingly important means of communication for elected Members.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Committee:

1. Approves the 'Member IT Usage Protocol' attached at Appendix 1.
2. Approves the 'Social Media Protocol for Members' attached at Appendix 2

## **REPORT DETAIL**

### **1. Member IT Usage Protocol**

- 1.1 The Council provides Members with ICT facilities to assist in the undertaking of their duties. Members are provided with a Council email account, accessible on IT hardware (either a laptop or ipad) equipped with mobile connectivity.
- 1.2 The protocol, attached at Appendix 1, provides guidance which ensures that Members make use of those facilities in an effective, efficient and responsible manner and in accordance with GDPR.
- 1.3 Specifically in relation to the motion agreed at the meeting of Full Council on 21 March 2018, the protocol establishes the appropriate use of electronic mail, with guidance on how and in what circumstances Council-provided email is not to be used.
- 1.4 The protocol should be read in conjunction with the Member Code of Conduct and the section concerning the use of local authority resources.

### **2. Social media protocol**

- 2.1 Social media has played an increasingly important part in the operation of a democratic society by offering positive opportunities for the Council and Councillors to engage with citizens.

- 2.2 The use of social media can however present Councillors with certain risks and challenges which could result in complaints being made against the Council, or allegations regarding a breach of the Member Code of Conduct.
- 2.3 Potential difficulties arising from the use of social media can be avoided if the information published by Councillors is objective, balanced, informative, and accurate. The effects of publishing information online can be long lasting, as access to online published content is pervasive and effectively published in perpetuity.
- 2.4 To assist Members, a protocol has been drafted which provides advice and guidance on the use of social media and is attached at Appendix 2 for approval.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

### **Financial implications and risks:**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### **Legal implications and risks:**

The Localism Act 2011 provides the framework for Councillor Conduct matters and the Council's Code of Conduct is in accordance with the legislation. The proposed protocols add guidance and background to the Code; use of the Council's resources for political or non council purposes is not permitted, and inappropriate statements released as councillors via email or social media may amount to a breach of the Code, for example by bringing the Council into disrepute. The proposed protocols act as guidance to uphold high standards of conduct in public life. .

### **Human Resources implications and risks:**

There are no immediate HR implications arising from this report.

### **Equalities implications and risks:**

Havering Council adheres to all aspects of the Equality Act 2010 legislation.

The Protocols provide additional focus to individual rights of others and how people and communities are referred to in the public domain.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None