

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: WEDNESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2012
title: USE OF COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT POLICY
submitted by: HEAD OF HR
principal author: MICHELLE SMITH

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To ask Members to approve an Electronic Communications Policy for the Council.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions - In order to meet our objective of being a well managed Council that provides efficient services, it is important that we keep abreast of technological developments that impact on the way we deliver services and the way in which our residents wish to engage with the Council, and ensure that all interactions are efficient and responsible.
- Community Objectives – See above.
- Corporate Priorities – See above.
- Other considerations – None.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 For the purposes of this policy electronic communication equipment is defined as:

- a) fixed point telephones;
- b) PC's (fixed and lap-top, e-mail, Internet and installed software);
- c) fax machines; and
- d) mobile phones

3. ISSUES

3.1 Over recent years the use of electronic communication within the Council has increased eg email, website, mobile technologies. At the same time, there is an ever increasing presence of mobile technology in people's lives eg mobile phones, graphics tablets.

3.2 The attached draft 'Use of Communications Policy' (Appendix 1) is an entirely new policy, designed to clarify the Council's expectations of employees in the appropriate use of electronic communication devices and social media tools.

3.3 The policy clarifies expectations of Ribble Valley employees when using electronic communication devices for both business and personal use.

3.4 UNISON have been consulted on the policy and support it. The policy has also been considered by CMT who recommend it for your approval. The policy would sit alongside the Council's existing policies relating to technology, namely the "Internet/Email Acceptable Use Policy" (Appendix 2), Information Technology Security Policy (Appendix 3) and the Data Protection Policy (Appendix 4).

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – No implications identified.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The Council has a duty to ensure that staff do not take actions that may be deemed harassing or intimidating, or that anything they communicate via electronic means is not defamatory to an individual or the Council as a whole. Any such action could result in civil action from customers/clients or other members of staff. In addition, without a clear policy and monitoring of useage the Council would be unaware of any potential misuse eg harassment, cyber bullying, and staff would not necessarily be aware of their responsibilities regarding the use of electronic communications equipment and the consequences of misuse.
- Political - No implications identified.
- Reputation - If guidelines are not in place an employee could make comments via social media that could damage the reputation of the Council or an employer.
- Equality and Diversity – The Council has a duty to protect all staff from any form of discrimination or harassment. The development of mobile and electronic communications equipment generally in society, has given rise to opportunities for 'cyber bullying' or forms of harassment.

5. **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Receive the report.

5.1 Approve the 'Use of Communications Equipment Policy" as detailed at Appendix 1.

MICHELLE SMITH
HEAD OF HR

JANE PEARSON
DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

APPENDIX 1
USE OF COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT POLICY

APPENDIX 2
INTERNET/EMAIL ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

APPENDIX 3
INFORMATION SECURITY POLICY

APPENDIX 4
DATA PROTECTION POLICY

For further information please ask for Michelle Smith, ext 4402.