

*Background Papers, if any, are specified at the end of the Report*

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES FOR STAFF AND MEMBERS**

*Contact Officer: Rachel Prance (01494 732903)*

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1. The Cabinet endorse the social media policies and recommend to Council that the policies are formally adopted.**

#### **Relationship to Council Objectives**

*Objective 1 - Efficient and effective customer focused services*

#### **Implications**

(i) *This matter is not a Key Decision within the Forward Plan.*

#### **Financial Implications**

*None*

#### **Risk Management Implications**

*There could be:*

- a) reputational risk to the Council as a result of misuse of social media;*
- b) potential legal action against the Council or individuals as a result of posting unsuitable or restricted content;*
- c) breaches of the Department of Communities and Local Government's recommended code of practice for local authority publicity.*

#### **Equalities Implications**

*Social media could be used to attack or abuse vulnerable people or groups/communities.*

#### **Sustainability Implications**

*None.*

#### **Report**

- 1 Social media is the term used for online tools, websites and interactive media that enables users to interact with each other in various ways, through sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interest. It

includes sites such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, MySpace and LinkedIn (this list is not exhaustive).

Social media provides a number of benefits for both staff and Members. It allows them the opportunity to connect with the community, listen to what people are saying and engage with them on an equal footing using two-way communications. It can, if used effectively, lead to: better informed residents; greater involvement with customers; the creation of a new dialogue between residents and the Council; better knowledge of our customers and communities; easier access to hard to reach groups such as the younger population.

However, where someone clearly identifies their association with the Council, they are expected to behave appropriately and in a way that is consistent with the Council's values and policies.

The policies attached at **Appendix 1** and **2** set out the principles which Chiltern District Council staff and Members are expected to follow when using social media. It applies to all staff and Members, regardless of status or position.

The intention of the policies are not to stop staff and Members from conducting legitimate activities on the internet through social media, but serve to flag up areas in which conflicts can arise.

It is important for both staff and Members are aware that whilst the law regarding the use of social media is currently fluid, contravention of the advice within this policy could result in disciplinary action (for staff under the Council's Staff Disciplinary Procedures; for Members under the Members Code of Conduct), civil action or even prosecution. This applies whether the equipment being used, when the policy is breached, is council owned or personal property.

The social media policies supplement the Chiltern District Council 'Acceptable Use Policy for Internet and Email' and the Council's Data Protection Policy.

As these policies also refer to South Bucks District Council they will be presented to its next available formal Cabinet in November and full Council in early December.

Both policies will be reviewed regularly to ensure they reflect the impact social media is having on the Council's business and to ensure any changes in regulation are reflected in the policies.

**Background papers:**

*Appendix 1 – Social media policy for staff at Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils*

*Appendix 2 – Social media policy for Members at Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils*