

Challenging Communication Issues - Update to the Officers Code of Conduct - Summary Report

Committee considering report: Governance and Ethics Committee

Date of Committee: 05 February 2018

Portfolio Member: Councillor Graham Bridgman

Date Portfolio Member agreed report:

Report Author: Sarah Clarke

Forward Plan Ref: N/a

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 A review has been undertaken of the Council's policies to ensure that they remained fit for purpose, having regard to the increasing use of social media.
- 1.2 It is recommended that the rules governing the use of social media by officers should form part of the Officers Code of Conduct.
- 1.3 This report seeks to advise of proposed amendments to the Code of Conduct relating to officers use of Social Media.

2. Recommendation

That Council approve the amendments to the Officers Code of Conduct within Part 13 of the Constitution, as detailed in Appendix C.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Financial:** None
- 3.2 **Policy:** This proposes amendments to the Officers Code of Conduct.
- 3.3 **Personnel:** Staff may be affected by the proposed changes to existing policies. However, the impact is considered to be minimal and is considered to reflect good practise.
- 3.4 **Legal:** None
- 3.5 **Risk Management:** These proposals seek to set out clear guidelines relating to the use of social media by officers.
- 3.6 **Property:** None
- 3.7 **Other:** None

4. Other options considered

- 4.1 Leave the policy unchanged.

Executive Summary

5. Introduction / Background

- 5.1 A review has been undertaken of the Council's policies relevant to the use by officers of social media.
- 5.2 As a result of that review, it is proposed to amend the Officers Code of Conduct so that this incorporates a section on the use of social media.

6. Proposal

It is proposed that the Officers Code of Conduct be amended as detailed in Appendix C.

7. Conclusion

It is considered that the proposed changes will provide greater clarity to officers about acceptable standards of behaviour in relation to social media and communications.

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – Equalities Impact Assessment
- 8.2 Appendix B – Supporting Information
- 8.3 Appendix C – Code of Conduct for Staff

Appendix A

Equality Impact Assessment - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, polices, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act), which states:

- "(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:**
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;**
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; This includes the need to:**
 - (i) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;**
 - (ii) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;**
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, with due regard, in particular, to the need to be aware that compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.**
- (2) The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.**
- (3) Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others."**

The following list of questions may help to establish whether the decision is relevant to equality:

- Does the decision affect service users, employees or the wider community?
- (The relevance of a decision to equality depends not just on the number of those affected but on the significance of the impact on them)
- Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?
- Is it a major policy, or a major change to an existing policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?
- Will the decision have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?
- Does the decision relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?
- Does the decision relate to an area with known inequalities?
- Does the decision relate to any equality objectives that have been set by the council?

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a full Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

What is the proposed decision that you are asking Council to make:	Amend the Officers Code of Conduct
Summary of relevant legislation:	Relevant local government and employment legislation.
Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the Council's key strategy priorities?	No
Name of assessor:	Sarah Clarke
Date of assessment:	16.10.17 and 24.01.18

Is this a:	Is this:		
Policy	Yes	New or proposed	No
Strategy	No	Already exists and is being reviewed	Yes
Function	No	Is changing	Yes
Service	No		

1 What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?

Aims:	The proposed decision should provide greater clarification for staff about their obligations under the relevant legislation and internal policies.
Objectives:	To ensure appropriate behaviour by staff.
Outcomes:	No inappropriate actions by employees and to ensure appropriate sanctions are available in the event of a breach.
Benefits:	Greater certainty for all parties.

2 Note which groups may be affected by the proposed decision. Consider how they may be affected, whether it is positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this.

(Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)

Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Age	None	
Disability	None	

Gender Reassignment	None	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	None	
Pregnancy and Maternity	None	
Race	None	
Religion or Belief	None	
Gender	None	There is a higher ratio of female to male workers employed by the Council. However, it is considered that there will be limited impact if any.
Sexual Orientation	None	
Further Comments relating to the item:		
The changes to the policies will impact all staff equally. The policies seek to clarify obligations.		

3 Result	
Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	No
Please provide an explanation for your answer:	
Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	No
Please provide an explanation for your answer:	

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered 'yes' to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.

If a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the [Equality Impact Assessment guidance and Stage Two template](#).

4 Identify next steps as appropriate:	
Stage Two required	No
Owner of Stage Two assessment:	

Timescale for Stage Two assessment:

Name: Sarah Clarke

Date: 16.10.17 and 24.01.18

Please now forward this completed form to Rachel Craggs, Principal Policy Officer (Equality and Diversity) (rachel.craggs@westberks.gov.uk), for publication on the WBC website.