

## NORTH DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, NORDON, SALISBURY ROAD, BLANDFORD FORUM, ON MONDAY, 28 APRIL 2008 STARTING AT 2.00 PM

**Present:** Cllr P Webb (Chairman)  
Cllr J Tanner (Vice Chairman)  
Cllr B Cooper  
Cllr R E Moyle  
Cllr C Tomlinson

**Officers:** Bryan Alford, ICT Manager  
Bobbie Bragg, Senior Personnel Adviser  
Debbie Wiltshire, Audit Partnership Manager

**Apologies:** Cllr Mrs S Hunt and Cllr Lt Col M Oliver

#### 16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made by members.

#### 17. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 March 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 18. REVIEW OF PERSONNEL POLICIES

##### 18.1 Email Policy

The ICT Manager tabled a paper which was part of a report compiled every two years by Price Waterhouse Coopers relating to how the public sector is increasingly having to deal with breaches of privacy from within the organisation. The percentage of breaches attributed to staff had increased greatly and was now seen as the greater threat. It was therefore important that policies were put in place to minimise the risk.

He explained that both the E-mail and Internet and Web Acceptable Use policies were designed to be explicit and clear to ensure staff were fully aware of their responsibilities whilst also setting out the sanctions available if mis-use occurred.

Cllr Tomlinson queried Section 5.1.2 of the policy relating to e-mail account closure. The policy was very clear for staff but did not include members. He felt that it was important that a member of staff was given responsibility to ensure that closure of member accounts was undertaken.

The ICT Manager stated that it had been agreed that a separate e-mail policy would be provided for members and within this the closure procedure would be clearly defined. The basic policy would be the same but members were not subject to the same sanctions and controls as employees. He stressed that

when using private e-mail addresses members should be encouraged to adhere to the council's policy.

Members felt it was important that the policy should clearly state who it related to. The ICT Manager agreed to put a caveat at the beginning of the individual policies clearly stating that it either related to employees or members.

Cllr Tomlinson raised the issue of personal use by staff and felt that any use of the e-mail for non-council business could be seen by the recipient as official. The Chairman stated that the caveat at the bottom of all e-mails sent made it explicit that all views expressed were personal unless it was stated otherwise.

It was highlighted that the policy allowed for personal use which must be reasonable and not detrimental to the council. The Audit Partnership Manager stated that reviews were undertaken of use and asked who would be required to make the judgement as to whether use was detrimental. The Chairman stated that it would be for the line manager to initially make a judgement and then sanctions would be applied through the existing Disciplinary procedure.

Cllr Moyle queried a paragraph under the Section of Data Protection and Email.

*“You must not leave a PC physically insecure (e.g. in an unlocked room) or in such a state that a third party could inspect e-mail or data and gain access to personal information”*

He felt that this could be mis-interpreted and needed to be clarified. The ICT Manager advised that the intention of the statement was to ensure that others did not have access to 'live' accounts on PC's. The Chairman added that the automatic lock out standard of five minutes for every computer had recently been discussed fully by both the Senior Management Team and the Staff Consultation Group and it had been agreed that this would be maintained in order to provide security. The ICT Manager agreed to look at this and ensure that the emphasis was improved.

## **Resolved**

That the E-Mail Use Policy be approved, subject to the changes requested above.

## **18.2 Internet and Web Acceptable Use Policy**

The ICT Manager explained that there was a big difference between the use of e-mail and the use of the internet. He stated that generally the internet was a lot more open. Its use did not have rigid controls or restrictions other than those web sites picked up by a programme called Surf Control which blocked access to sites which included such things as pornography, terrorism etc.

Members looked at each section of the policy and raised the following issues:-

## **5.2 Acceptable Use – Compliance with Legislation (Obscenity)**

Cllr Cooper felt that the last sentence should be changed to read “Similarly the Protection of Children Act 1978 makes it an offence to publish, distribute or **download** obscene material of a child”

This was agreed.

## **5.3 Acceptable Use – Compliance with Council Regulations (third bullet point)**

It was highlighted that this should be amended to read “The Council maintains a clear separation between official Council Webpages and personal/unofficial Webpages which have **NOT** been subjected to strict editorial control.”

This was agreed.

## **5.4 Unacceptable Use (vii)**

“Distributing or discussing on Message Boards any Council of North Dorset proprietary or confidential information”

Members felt that this statement was unclear and the ICT Manager agreed to revise and amend it.

### **Unacceptable Use (viii)**

This should be amended to read “..... misrepresents the Council or **could** bring the Council into disrepute”

This was agreed.

The Chairman questioned whether this policy would apply to members or whether there would be a separation, as with the e-mail policy. The ICT Manager responded that he felt that this policy did not currently apply to members as the current provision of services to councillors did not allow for internet access. The Chairman added that members had to exercise their own judgement but it would be useful for them to be made aware of the policy.

The ICT Manager stated that the sanctions contained with the proposed policy would not apply to members and he was unsure whether the Code of Conduct would provide the appropriate sanctions for any miss-use. He agreed that a background summary for all members may be useful and would speak to the Solicitor to the Council to ascertain the best way forward.

## **Resolved**

That the Internet and Web Acceptable Use Policy be approved subject to the amendment requested above.

## **19. CODES AND PROTOCOLS**

### **Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Whistle-blowing Policy**

The Audit Partnership Manager stated that the purpose of the review was to improve the detail contained within and to align the policies with those of East Dorset District Council. She added that the Whistle-blowing Policy had been updated to strengthen the level of assurance provided to staff who may find it necessary to make a referral.

The Chairman highlighted to members that the Standards Committee had already seen the papers and had made two changes to the documents. The Audit Partnership Manager confirmed that the recommendations had been taken into account in the document before this Committee. Members agreed with the comments made by the Standards Committee and felt that both of the documents were very clear.

In order to ensure further clarity it was felt that the Whistleblowing Policy should be slightly re-structured to include an introduction. The Audit Partnership Manager agreed to take this point back to the Financial Services Manager before he presented the two documents to Council for inclusion in the Constitution.

### **Resolved**

That the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and the Whistle-blowing Policy be recommended to Council for adoption and inclusion in Part 5 of the Constitution following the minor amendments as outlined above.

The meeting ended at 3.30 pm

**CHAIRMAN**