

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C/049/2006-07.

Date of meeting: 4 September 2006.



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services.

Subject: Internet Usage Policy.

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Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 – 56 4470).

Recommendations:

(1) That, as recommended by the Joint Consultative Committee, the attached Internet Acceptable Usage Policy be agreed.

Report:

1. There have been recent reports in the press about extensive and personal use of internet facilities by workers in the public sector. This has been a cause of great concern for some employers, who as a result have restricted internet usage for their employees.
2. In response to the above concerns the Council last year installed new audit software which can report on the levels of internet usage in greater detail than has been possible previously. The software will also report on any attempts that are made to access inappropriate internet sites (which are blocked using internet security software). An Internal Audit investigation of staffs' use of internet facilities has been carried out, and has revealed the following:
 - There are some staff who spend a large amount of time 'surfing' the internet. An analysis of the sites visited indicates that in many instances the majority of this relates to personal rather than business purposes, and an unacceptable amount of work time is being wasted as a result of this.
 - Some staff have used Council internet access to try to visit sites which are inappropriate because of their content. This is of particularly serious concern.
3. At the request of The Management Board, The Head of ICT and the Chief Internal Auditor have revised the internet policy, in particular to make clearer the guidelines on acceptable usage in personal time. There are also clear guidelines on the potential implications for employees who breach the policy. It is proposed that all members of staff with access to the internet will be required to sign up to the revised policy in lieu of which internet access rights could be withdrawn.
4. The Council recognises the benefits that the use of the internet brings to many staff in their day-to-day work. The Council encourages the continued use of these facilities to assist staff in their work. It is also prepared to permit staff to use the facilities for their personal use in their own time, and subject to this facility not being abused. The expectation would be that such use would normally be before or after work or at lunchtimes.
5. The Council's e-mail and telephone policies are also being revised and will be submitted for approval later in the year.

Statement in support of recommended action:

6. To ensure that clear and unequivocal guidelines over internet usage using Council ICT equipment are provided for the benefit of staff.

Options for action:

7. To not agree and implement the proposed Internet Usage Policy.

Consultation undertaken:

8. Joint Consultative Committee.

Resource implications:

Budget provision: None.

Personnel: None.

Land: None.

Community Plan/BVPP reference: N/A.

Relevant statutory powers: N/A.

Background papers: File papers in Human Resources.

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: None.

Key Decision reference (if required): N/A.