

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>02 JULY 2010</b>
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>BLOGGING AND SOCIAL NETWORKING GUIDANCE</b>
<b>REPORT BY:</b>	<b>DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER</b>

## **Purpose**

To consider proposed guidance for local authority, parish and town councillors in respect of blogging, social networking, and other methods of communication.

## **Recommendation(s)**

### **THAT:**

- (a) **The guidance be approved for adoption by Council, subject to any amendments made by the standards committee; and**
- (b) **It be distributed to all local authority, parish and town councillors.**

## **Key Points Summary**

- Standards for England has issued guidance on blogging and social networking. At its meeting on 16 April 2010, the Standards Committee agreed to develop this guidance for Herefordshire Council, with additional advice for situations when members find themselves the subject of derogatory comments in publications of any nature.
- The proposed guidance is attached to this report at Appendix A, for consideration and approval.

## **Alternative Options**

- 1 The Standards Committee and the Council are not obliged to publish such guidance; however, because electronic communication now has a much wider use, there is significant merit in providing guidance to all members.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 2 Electronic forms of publication are being used increasingly by councillors as an alternative method of communication with their constituents. In general, this kind of communication is to be encouraged. Some incidents of misuse have been reported to the Monitoring Officer. Guidance is essential, therefore, to ensure that members are aware of some of the pitfalls of blogging and social networking, particularly given the rapid and widespread distribution of this format. The guidance will help members to ensure that they are compliant with the Code of conduct.

## **Community Impact**

3. Correct use of blogging and social networking can be an effective and enjoyable way of engaging with the community when used appropriately, and is likely to reach groups of people who use this medium in preference to longer established methods.

## **Financial Implications**

4. There is no financial impact for the Council. There might be a cost to the individual councillor if good practice is not adhered to, due to the potential for civil claims in instances when blogs and social networks are used inappropriately to make adverse comments about individuals. .

## **Appendices**

5. "Blogging and Social Networking Guide" attached.

## **Background Papers**

There are none.