

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CABINET MEMBER FOR COUNCIL SERVICES

22 December 2014

Report of the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources

Use of Internet & E-mail Services

1 Purpose of Report

To further consider the use of the Council's internet and e-mail services and the planned withdrawal of personal internet and e-mail use by employees.

2 Information and Analysis

The Council provides a range of internet and e-mail services which are used primarily to provide direct public access to the internet in libraries, children's homes, homes for older people etc and by staff to support the provision of service delivery.

The Council's current internet and e-mail policy permits employees to access the internet in non-work time and allows personal use of their Council ("@derbyshire.gov.uk") email address.

A decision was taken on 20 October 2014 by the Cabinet Member for Council Services that the personal use of the Council's internet and e-mail services by employees would be withdrawn with effect from the end of December 2014.

Staff were notified of the decision on 20 October 2014 and were invited to raise any relevant issues. This resulted in a series of frequently asked questions and answers being published on the Council's intranet (Dnet).

Very few issues have been raised regarding the intended withdrawal of employees' ability to use their Council e-mail address for personal purposes. The majority of staff seem to accept that using their Council e-mail address is no longer appropriate for personal purposes and that it should only be used for official Council business.

However, strong representations have been received from staff and the trade unions with regard to the use of internet services. The general view is that employees are being denied internet access in their own time due to the excessive use by a minority of staff which should be dealt with by

effective communication about the limits of appropriate use and internet site blocking. There is also considerable confusion about what would in future be deemed acceptable internet use for work purposes were personal use to be disallowed and concern over access for partner organisations which could adversely affect service provision. To develop, distribute and subsequently maintain the detailed guidance that would be required to cover the wide range of internet usage issues that have been raised would be excessively time consuming.

In light of the representations which have been received it is considered that limited personal use of the Council's Internet service by employees in their own time should be maintained but with very clear rules about the parameters of personal use which will meet the interests of both the Council and its employees. These clear rules will be the subject of further discussions with the trade unions. It is also intended to improve the monitoring information available to managers and to keep the level of internet usage under review.

In terms of blocking access to inappropriate internet sites it is proposed that the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources be authorised, subject to consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Services, to approve the blocking of individual sites or categories of internet sites. Blocking is already in place for some internet sites and categories considered to be unsuitable under the current policy.

Overall use of the Council's internet services has increased significantly in recent years and this trend is expected to continue into the foreseeable future. Changes in the technologies used on the internet have resulted in the use of more video and audio content and this together with more prevalent use of internet based services and resources requires higher internet capacity (ie bandwidth). Capacity issues with the current service are now adversely impacting on the delivery of Council services and in particular are limiting the increased use of wireless access points by the public. In these circumstances, and taking into account the proposed continued personal use of the internet by employees (albeit on a more limited basis than at present), analysis shows that the Council's current level of internet capacity will need to be upgraded to meet public demand and expectations and the delivery of Council Services. It is therefore proposed to increase the capacity of the current internet service and regularly review usage to ensure sufficient capacity exists so that service delivery is not adversely affected.

As the decision to remove internet access was due to come into force on the 31st December 2014 it is desirable that staff are informed without delay of the revised arrangements. In view of this urgency, it is considered that it would be appropriate for the Cabinet Member to waive call-in. In accordance with the procedure set out in the Constitution, Councillor Clive Moesby, Chair of the Improvement and Scrutiny Committee, Resources, has been consulted and he is satisfied that the

decision proposed in this report is reasonable and to it being treated as a matter of urgency.

3 Financial Considerations

The estimated cost of upgrading the internet service is £44k per annum which can be met from within existing departmental budgets.

4 Human Resources Considerations

Although the provision of personal internet and email services is not a term and condition of employment it is appropriate to continue to consult with the recognised trade unions on revisions to current policies and practices.

5 Legal and Human Rights Considerations

Although, as described in the report, employees have enjoyed the benefit of access to the Council's internet and email services, such access does not represent a contractual term of employment and the benefit may be withdrawn or amended at the Council's discretion.

6 Other Considerations

In preparing this report, the relevance of the following factors has been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, environmental, health, equality and diversity, property and transport considerations.

7 Key Decision?

No.

8 Is it necessary to waive the call-in period?

Yes

9 Officer's Recommendation

That the Cabinet Member :-

- a. re-affirms the decision to prevent employees from using their Council ("@derbyshire.gov.uk") e-mail address for personal use with effect from the 31st December 2014.
- b. agrees to maintain limited personal use of the Council's internet service by employees in their own time on the basis of the

development of clear rules and enhanced monitoring arrangements.

- c. authorises the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources to block access to unsuitable internet sites, subject to consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Services.
- d. approves the upgrade to the internet service as detailed in the report.
- e. agrees to waive call-in.

Judith Greenhalgh
Strategic Director of Corporate Resources