

Meeting:	Standards Committee
Date:	9 June 2009
Subject:	Protocol For Councillors – Website Facilities
Responsible Officer:	Carol Cutler – Director Business Transformation and Customer Services
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Paul Osborn, Portfolio Holder Performance, Communication and Corporate Services
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out revised proposals for councillors writing information and/or including material on the Internet pages web logs or blogs.

Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to:

- (i) Note the report;
- (ii) Agree that a report on the proposal for training for Members on the use of web resources be submitted to a future meeting of the Member Development Panel

Section 2 – Report

Background

A report was previously brought to the Standards Committee on 17th December 2007. This report proposed that the Council adopt a protocol governing web content for Councillors on the Harrow website and that Members be given the opportunity to create a page on the Council website. Following discussions at the Committee, this approach was revised. The Committee further recommended that the matter be referred to the Director of Business transformation and Customer Services and the Member Development Panel for further consideration, and that consideration should include whether a better way forward is to have links to external sites for political matters, the practice and experience at Lambeth, funding and training for Councillors.

Current Situation

There is currently a page on each Member of the Council on the website generated automatically from the Council's Committee system, modern.gov. The information contained on these pages is the following:

- Contact information
- Attendance record/declarations and register of interest
- Responsibilities
- Committee appointments
- Appointments to outside bodies
- Additional information (normally just date of when first elected)

In addition, one Councillor links to their own website and one Councillor had previously linked to their blog.

The table below highlights the information a selection of other London Councils have on their websites about their Councillors:

Borough	Information
Barnet	The Leader of the Council has a blog and uses a Twitter feed
Brent	Same information as Harrow
Camden	Same information as Harrow
Ealing	Same information as Harrow
H+F	Same information as Harrow
Hounslow	Same information as Harrow
Islington	Same information as Harrow
Lambeth	Each Member has a page to put up information about themselves. These are generally static pages. Members can also link to their local party websites.
Westminster	Same information as Harrow

Proposal

We would like to formalise proposals to give Members the opportunity to make more information available to constituents via the website. This would provide Members the opportunity to communicate with their constituents via an additional channel while also offering further facilities from the Council website. As the table above shows, it would offer a functionality that most other London boroughs do not.

Rather than provide additional pages on the Council website, a link to external resources that the Member requests would be provided. It is envisaged that the external resources will range from linking to the local constituency websites, to linking to blogs to linking to any other web spaces (eg personal websites). Members will be responsible for the content of these sites.

To enable Members to take advantage of this, training sessions on the use of web resources will be provided. This would include an introduction to the web and its uses, together with training on the use of resources such as Twitter, Word Press (blogging website) and page creation sites, such as MySpace. Details of this training will be submitted to a future meeting of the Member Development Panel for consideration. This training could be delivered by existing internal resource at no additional cost.

Legal Implications

Under section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 the Council shall not publish or arrange for the publication of any material which appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party. Members are required to comply with the Code of Conduct and the Local Authority Code of Practice on Publicity.

If a link is to be provided from Members page on the Council's website to their individual website/blogs, a clear disclaimer must be included that neither the linked site nor the contents of that site is endorsed by the Council. In addition, it will be necessary to remove links to all external sites during the pre-election period.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report. There is no additional cost in terms of maintenance and licences in implementing this decision.

Risk Management Implications

There are no risk management implications

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name:....Sheela Thackrar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: ...29/5/09		
Name:Jessica Farmer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: ...29/5/09.....		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Ben Jones, Project Manager (Customer Services and Business Transformation, 020 8736 6781)

Background Papers: Standards Committee Report, 17th December 2007

If appropriate, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	NO
2.	Corporate Priorities	NO