

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

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Report Originator	Sue Lyons Head of Democratic & Legal Services Monitoring Officer	Work Programme Ref: No C15/003	
Wards Affected	None	16 th December 2015	
Title	CHANGING THE CONSTITUTION - PROTOCOL FOR THE USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES AND SOCIAL MEDIA BY MEMBERS		

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek approval of draft protocol for the use of electronic devices and social media by Members during public meetings of the council for inclusion in the Council's Constitution.

2. INFORMATION

- 2.1 It was noted that the Standards Advisory Committee had met on two occasions to develop a draft protocol for the use of electronic devices and social media by Members during public meetings. The Standards Advisory Committee recommended the following:-

“the draft Protocol be recommended to Executive and Council for adoption, subject to the following:-

- The use of social media be not permitted in Planning and Licensing Committee meetings*
- Accessing social media sites during the meeting to give contemporaneous comment on the discussion prior to conclusion of the debate be not permitted*

- 2.2 At its meeting on 14th October 2015, one minor amendment was made by the Executive to allow the Mayor, Chair *or their nominee* to have the discretion to stop use of any or all personal electronic equipment if they considered the use to be disruptive and it was detracting from the proper conduct of the meeting.

- 2.3 The Executive also recommended that the Protocol be included within the Council's Constitution.

- 2.4 The draft protocol, as amended, is set out at Appendix A.

3. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None arising from this report.

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4. CONSULTATION AND CUSTOMER IMPACT

The draft protocol has been considered by the Standards Advisory Committee and the Council's Executive.

5. FINANCIAL RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

None arising from this report

6. HR IMPLICATIONS

None arising from this report

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There is no legal restriction on the use of electronic equipment and social media by councillors during council meetings. It is the case that greater freedoms have been given under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 to all those attending meetings to record meetings and interact through social media during meetings. The Department of Local Government, in its Guidance, states that;

“The national rules do not prevent councillors from tweeting and blogging at meetings, so they should be able to do so provided it is not disruptive and does not detract from the proper conduct of the meeting. Whilst councillors are expected to comply with their body's code of conduct, this should not prevent councillors from tweeting or blogging when appropriate.”

- 7.2 There are risks, however, in using social media. Adopting a Protocol to provide guidance to members will assist to ensure that the use of electronic equipment and social media during meetings is appropriate. The public can be reassured that there are rules in place regarding the use thus reducing the risk of challenge to decisions and protecting the reputation of the Council and its Members.

- 7.3 The Protocol will comply with the Council's duty under the Constitution to ensure that its decisions are open and accountable to local people.

8. RECOMMENDATION

That the draft Protocol for the Use of Electronic Devices and Social Media by Members During Public Meetings be adopted for inclusion in the Council's Constitution.

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Background Papers:

Previous Reports/Minutes:

Standards Advisory Committee
20th October 2014
Minute 14.STA.06
28th September 2015
Minute 15.STA.04

Executive
14th October 2015
Minute No. 15.EX.39