

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

18 November 2014

REPORT OF HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS

PROTECTIVE MARKING SCHEME

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide for a system of Protective Marking compatible with the Government Approved scheme.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That a system of Protective Marking for the Council be adopted based on the Protective Marking Scheme appended to this Report.
- 2.2 That the Head of Communications as Monitoring Officer be given delegated authority to ensure the future revision of the system of Protective Marking in line with legislation and best practice.
- 2.3 That the Head of Communications instigate a programme of training for the use of the Protected Marking Scheme.

3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Government Security Classification Policy (GSCP) is, as the name suggests, a system used by central government bodies to formally indicate the sensitivity of documents or other information assets, and therefore indicate how such assets should be handled. It replaces the former Government Protective Marking Scheme (GMPS) from April 2014.
- 3.2 The GSCP prescribes the levels which documents or other information assets may be assigned to, and also prescribes principles and criteria for assessing how this assigning should be done. For a two-tier shire district authority like Melton Borough Council, the nature of the work of the Council would be covered by the categories of OFFICIAL or OFFICIAL (SENSITIVE), where the OFFICIAL category is subdivided to capture the different impact levels relating to the former categories of PROTECT or RESTRICTED.
- 3.3 This is because some MBC information assets may impact at a national level, such as those linked to crime and disorder policy, emergency planning, defence assets within the Borough, and large personal data transfers to national-level organisations such as the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).
- 3.4 A draft Protective Marking Scheme forms **Appendix 1** to this Report; this shows how the two relevant categories map to the Council's Information Sharing Risk Matrix, and therefore how the disclosure of such information would relate to the severity rating and impact under the Risk Matrix. This rating should assist in judging what Protective Marking Level should be applied to an asset.

4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Adopting a system of Protective Marking that is compatible with the GSCP will require a change of habits in the production of documents and handling of information assets, and guidance to staff will be required to explain the change and provide the necessary advice and materials to support the day-to-day use of such arrangements.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no specific implications for financial and other resources of adopting a Protective Marking system, except that this adoption should in principle help to reduce the likelihood of fines arising from data protection breaches.

5.2 There may be some impact on staff in respect of the requirement for training around the use of the Scheme as part of its introduction.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

6.1 Adopting a system of Protective Marking compatible with GSCP will help to ensure that the Council’s information assets have appropriate protection applied. There should not be any specific legal implications or issues around powers.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

7.1 There are no specific community safety issues directly arising from this report.

8.0 EQUALITIES

8.1 There are no specific issues in relation to Equalities.

9.0 RISKS

9.1 The risk of not adopting a system of Protective Marking compatible with the GSCP means that there is a higher risk of inappropriate release of sensitive information than is necessary, in relation to the relatively modest amount of implementation work and guidance that adoption of such a system would entail.

Probability
↓

Very High A				
High B				
Significant C			1	
Low D		2		
Very Low E				
Almost Impossible F				
	IV Neg- ligible	III Marg- inal	II Critical	I Catast- rophic

Impact →

Risk No.	Description
1	Not adopting a system of Protective Marking will leave the Council open to increased information risk
2	Adopting a system of Protective Marking should help to reduce information risk through what is considered to be good practice

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 There are no climate change issues directly arising from this report.

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 Consultation on the adoption of a Protective Marking system is not a requirement.

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 All wards are potentially affected, to the extent that the Council's information assets may cover activities relating to the whole Borough.

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Appendices: 1 (including Annexe 1)
Background Papers: N/A
Reference: