Meeting:	**Executive**
Date:	**13 October 2009**
Subject:	**Central Bedfordshire Council Members' Acceptable Use Policy**
Report of:	**Councillor Maurice Jones - Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources**
Summary:	This report proposes the adoption of the 'Members Acceptable Use Policy' which provides guidance on the use of computer and telephony services and ensures that these are operated in an economical, secure, accessible and legally compliant manner.

Advising Officer:	Clive Heaphy, Director of Corporate Resources
Contact Officer:	Caroline Carruthers, Assistant Director for ICT and Property
Public/Exempt:	Public
Wards Affected:	All
Function of:	Executive
Key Decision	Yes
Reason for urgency/ exemption from call-in (if appropriate)	This is one of a suite of policies required to ensure that Central Bedfordshire Council is able to achieve the mandatory Government Connect compliance.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Executive approve and implement the Central Bedfordshire Council Members Acceptable Use Policy Report as a published policy document.

Reason for Recommendations:	*This policy is to provide guidance for the Councillors on the acceptable use of Central Bedfordshire provided ICT equipment. This policy is one of a number that is required to be in place so that Central Bedfordshire Council is able to be assessed successfully and achieve the mandatory Government Connect compliance standard. The standard sets out processes that must be in place to ensure the security of data. As from 30th. September 2009, the standard requires all Revenue and Benefits information to and from Central Government to be accessible via the Government Connect route (Government Secure Extranet). It is vital that the Council has this policy document in place to achieve compliance.*

Background

1.   To ensure that Central Bedfordshire meets all its obligations to provide a secure electronic environment, a number of policies, procedures and guidelines for managing, operating and using the organisation's information systems are required. This is critical and involves developing policies and procedures that document the organisation's intentions to diligently manage electronic information throughout its life cycle and keep it safe from unauthorised persons. Policies are currently agreed and in place which govern the operation of equipment and systems by permanent and temporary staff.

2.   The purpose of this acceptable use policy is to provide guidance to members on the acceptable use of equipment and software and to provide a framework which will ensure that these are operated in an economical, secure, accessible and legally compliant manner.

3.   In addition the Government has placed a requirement upon all local authorities to ensure that data transfer relating to Revenue and Benefits information to and from Central Government must be undertaken via the Government Connect route (Government Secure Extranet). In order to be able to utilise this route each local authority must be assessed to ensure that their policies, procedures, systems and security (physical and electronic) are compliant and meet the required standards. Central Bedfordshire as a new authority was allowed an extension to the compliance period, up to the 30th September 2009, to bring all these areas up to the required mandatory standards and code of conduct. As part of this process it is important that the Council has a document setting out its policy on Members Acceptable Use of IT and telephony equipment and software in place to achieve compliance.

Acceptable Use Policy

4.   The adoption and operation of the policy will provide a number of benefits for Central Bedfordshire Council and individual Members.

      Economical Use

5.   Correct use of computer and telephony services should reduce overall costs incurred by Central Bedfordshire Council.

      Secure Use

6.   Correct use of computer and telephony services will maintain high levels of security. E.g. Use of passwords on computer screens should minimize the risk of unauthorised access to information.

      Access and guidance

7.   Correct use of computer and telephony services will allow members to access ICT information to assist them in carrying out their duties and will allow all Councillors to benefit from clear guidelines as to what constitutes acceptable usage of Central Bedfordshire Council provided ICT equipment.

Legally Compliant

8.   Correct use of computer and telephony services will assist in ensuring compliance with legal requirements: the ability to supply information requested under the Freedom of Information Act, for example.

Conclusion and Next Steps

9.   All Central Bedfordshire Members will be provided with a copy of the approved policy document.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS
Council Priorities: The adoption of the policy will assist Members in undertaking activities relating to all five of the Councils priorities. **Financial:** Adoption of the policy will provide guidance on acceptable usage of Council provided ICT equipment and as a result, assist in reducing the financial cost of supporting and resolving ICT issues for the Councillors concerned. **Legal:** Failure to adopt this policy could leave the authority open to having its reputation damaged by negative press in the event of an incident occurring which would have been covered by this policy. This could involve issues relating to the Freedom of Information Act, Data Protection Act or other legal statute. **Risk Management:** All Revenue and Benefits information to and from Central Government will only be accessible via the Government Connect route (Government Secure Extranet) after 30th. September 2009. This policy is an important part of achieving compliance with the Government code and standards. **Staffing (including Trades Unions):** None **Equalities/Human Rights:** Adoption of the policy will provide guidance on acceptable use of the Council provided ICT equipment in adherence with Equalities and Human Rights. In particular, the policy emphasises that the E-mail system should not be used to send racist or other discriminatory, pornographic, illegal, libellous or offensive material that might bring members, their service or the council into disrepute **Community Safety:** None

Sustainability:
Adoption of the policy will help contribute to economic use of ICT equipment. This will reduce energy use and therefore reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Central Bedfordshire Council Member Acceptable Use Policy V1.0

Background Information - None