



Balancing act

Scenario A3: Is there an issue?

The anti-airport pressure group, long-established, has a vibrant website on which a number of scurrilous posts, comments and documents are regularly uploaded. There has been a pattern of defamatory material being included on the website and it has long been a source of enormous irritation to both officers and members of the local authorities.

The district council, unitary authority and county council all have identical “use of resources” guidance that says:

‘No member may use any IT facilities provided by their council for any other purpose than their legal functions as a councillor. This prohibition includes (but is not limited to) political matters, business matters or accessing inappropriate material’

Three councillors all access the website. Councillor Animal accesses it and, when questioned, states that he did so because “the people running this group are jolly good folk and clearly understand the issues, unlike some of the nitwits I have to speak with”.

Councillor Bear accessed it, but is unable to explain further why she accessed it (although the confidential documentation that she was supplied with, including her name at the top, now appears scanned as documentation on the site).

Councillor Eagle, the Leader of the unitary authority, says he accessed the website in order to better inform himself prior to conducting a press briefing with journalists to rebut some of the scurrilous accusations made about the development.

What do you think about the circumstance and behaviours?

What are the differences of opinion around your table?

Where are the areas for consistency greatest?