**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**29TH APRIL 2009**

**GOVERNMENT CONNECT – CODE OF CONNECTION**

| Responsible Portfolio Holder | Councillor Dr. D. W. P. Booth |
|---|---|
| Responsible Head of Service | Head of E-Government & Customer  Services |
| Non-Key Decision | |

1. **SUMMARY**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Cabinet on the ongoing work to obtain compliance with the Government Connect project and the Code of Connection (CoCo).

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 That Cabinet note the information contained in this report relating to the required security measures to obtain compliance with the Code of Connection.

2.2 That approval of the policies required for Code of Connection compliance be delegated to the Head of E-Government & Customer Services.

3. **BACKGROUND**

**What is Government Connect**

3.1 Government Connect is a government project led by the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP).  The project is designed to provide a secure network linking up all local authorities in England and Wales to central government departments. The secure network is called Government Connect Secure Extranet (GCSx)  It will provide a secure way of sharing sensitive personal data without using the postal service, Internet or unsecure e-mail.  All emails that are used to conduct or support official Council  business will be sent using a 'bromsgrove.gov.uk' address.  All emails sent via the Government Connect Secure Extranet (GCSx) will use the 'bromsgrove.gcsx.gov.uk' format.

3.2 Initially, Government Connect will require councils to use the network to share Benefits and Pensions data with the DWP.  It is anticipated that, over time, the GCSx will become the only accepted method of data transfer between local authorities and central government.

## What is the Code of Connection (CoCo)

3.2 The Code of Connection (CoCo) defines the minimum standards and processes that an authority must comply with before being able to connect to the GCSx. Achieving compliance to the CoCo requires the local authority to provide a compliance statement and supporting comment against a number of security control measures (there are 90+ measures)  The measures are divided into required (must do) controls and recommended (should do) controls.

All required controls have to be in place by March 31$^{st}$ 2009.  Lack of compliance with the required controls will result in removal of access to the DWP Customer Information System (CIS) The CIS is used to carryout Benefit Assessments. Lack of access to this system would make the delivery of the Benefit Assessment service impossible. This would result in severe loss of income for BDC.

Recommended controls must have a stated completion date. The CoCo document and all of the associated controls will be audited in the near future by the Government Connect team to ensure compliance.  Examples of some of these controls include:

| Protective Monitoring | All logs MUST be retained for a minimum of six months. Organisations MUST also be aware of any additional legislation that may require them to hold logs for longer periods. | MUST COMPLY |
|---|---|---|
| Personal Firewalls | Unprivileged users and processes MUST not be able to disable or reconfigure the Personal Firewall software. | MUST COMPLY |
| Mobile Working | Mobile solutions accessing GCSx connected networks MUST follow the guidance referenced from the Guidance Notes to this document. | MUST COMPLY |
| User Education | A personal commitment statement or acceptable usage policy MUST be in place, or users MUST have otherwise positively confirmed their acceptance that communications sent or received by means of the GSi may be intercepted or monitored. | MUST COMPLY |

3.3 In order to ensure that BDC achieves compliance with the CoCo a number of policies relating to technical infrastructure and access to information are required.  These policies are listed below:

- Communications and Operation Management Policy
- Computer Telephone and Desk Use Policy
- Email Policy
- GCSx AUP and Personal Commitment Statement
- Human Resources Information Security Policy
- Information Protection Policy
- Information Security Incident Management Policy

- Information Security Policy Overview
- Internet Acceptable Usage Policy
- IT Access Policy
- IT Infrastructure Security Policy
- Legal Responsibilities Policy
- Remote Working Policy
- Removable Media Policy
- Software Policy

Some of these policies are already in place within BDC. Timescales have been agreed with the Government Connect team to ensure the remaining policies are completed as required.

3.4 The Council is currently being assessed as to its ability to meet the demands of the CoCo. The Council is already on the third iteration of the assessment process with feedback indicating that the majority of the mandatory security controls are already wholly or partly in place.

3.5 There will however have to be changes made to some of the processes and procedures that are currently common practice within the Council. These include some aspects of physical security of documents, access to computer systems, a ban on forwarding e-mails to unsecured accounts etc. Users of the GCSx will also have to sign a personal commitment statement to comply with the Code of Connection.

## 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 A Capital budget for the Government Connect project was approved in 2006. The project has been delayed for a number of years due to Central Government uncertainties about how the project should be implemented. The Capital budget is now being spent to facilitate compliance with the Code of Connection. There are no other financial implications at this stage.

## 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None

## 6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

6.1 The proposals set out in the report link to the Council's Improvement objective.

## 7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 The key risk associated with this project is failure to comply with the CoCo. Lack of compliance would result in the removal of access to the DWP Customer Information System which is used to conduct Benefit Assessments.  Government Connect have already confirmed that from April 2009 three central government departments (Dept of Works and Pensions,

Dept for Children, Schools and Families and Communities and Local Government) will begin phasing out less efficient, robust or secure internet or postal based methods of communication with local authorities.

## 8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Government Connect will ensure that customers personal and restricted information is held and used correctly. It will also ensure that customer data is transmitted to central government departments by means of secure approved network technologies.

## 9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

## 10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There will be opportunities in the future to remove some systems that are currently used to connect to the DWP. However, removal of these small, low cost applications will not result in any significant savings.

## 11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

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| Procurement Issues – None |
| Personnel Implications – None |
| Governance/Performance Management – None |
| Community Safety  inc Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 – None |
| Policy – None |
| Environmental – None |

## 12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

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|---|---|
| Portfolio Holder | Yes |
| Chief Executive | Yes via CMT |
| Executive Director  - Partnerships and Projects | Yes via CMT |
| Assistant Chief Executive | Yes via CMT |
| Head of Service | Yes via CMT |
| Head of Financial Services | Yes via CMT |
| Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services | Yes via CMT |
| Head of Organisational Development & HR | Yes via CMT |
| Corporate Procurement Team | No |

## 13. WARDS AFFECTED

All wards

**14.  APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Network Diagram for GCSx

**15.  BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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