Here are 20 reasons why you should open up social media access to all of your staff…

1. We don't ban our staff from using a telephone or talking face-to-face to customers – so why would we ban staff from engaging with our customers via social media?
2. Why be short-sighted and ban social media for all – if someone mis-uses it there is a code of conduct to bring into force. Simple.
3. Worried that shirkers will, well, shirk on social media? Then deal with the shirkers and the shirking.
4. Why bother giving access to the internet at all if you are going to ban legitimate web sites?
5. If it's a concern, develop and promote a social media policy in order to get the most out of it.
6. Many staff have smartphones now and can access social media through them anyway whenever they want to at work.
7. "I can engage with 4,000 customers via our twitter feed but with almost none of my own colleagues at work. That's madness."
8. Do we ban staff from reading newspapers? Is there any real difference?
9. It's important to make the differential between opening up social media to staff 'to read' and opening up social media for staff 'to post'. Do the powers that be understand the difference?
10. Research appears to now indicate that staff will not read or 'like' their employers social media feeds and pages if they are banned from looking at them at work (and many staff are residents and customers so why alienate in this way?)
11. Staff should be an organisation's advocates. Why create this unnecessary barrier?
12. The huge opportunity for 'myth-busting' via social media is lost if you ban your own staff from engaging and getting involved. The riots of 2011 gave multiple examples of where staff helped stop rumours.
13. If social media use by staff risks bringing viruses into an organisation then your firewalls are rubbish.
14. It's very easy to ban or warn an individual member of staff who mis-uses social media at work or says something libellous. But don't penalise everyone with an organisational ban.
15. You will create yourself a credibility gap in banning social media use at work. Most staff are adults and self-regulate their behaviour.
16. If your customers are using social media to make enquiries why on earth would you prevent staff from helping them through these channels?

17. Why would you not want to embrace free channels of engagement with residents, routes which some customers are happy to channel shift to voluntarily (and which can reduce an organisations costs)?

18. Reputational damage – in the absence of a forward-thinking, positive and innovative organisational culture, an opposite culture will develop…

19. Should we also ban telephones and bring in a telephone usage protocol and telephone effectiveness assessment form? It isn't right, helpful or necessary to separate out social media from other customer channels.

20. Banning social media means that an organisation does not trust its own staff. And it also suggests that they do not trust their managers to manage their own staff. What a sad reflection (that one courtesy of @siwhitehouse)

Ideas crowd-sourced at the unconference session of the 'facebook in the public sector' event on 14 March 2012