



Internet Policy and Procedure

Adopted on November 16th 2020

The use of the Internet is now an essential and commonplace tool for most Employees. Those who use the internet have a responsibility to do so in a professional manner. To assist with this, we issue the following guidelines which all employees are asked to read and comply with.

The Council reserves the right to access and monitor any or all areas of any computer and computer software systems which it owns (including email boxes and messages and telephone calls) from time to time for business reasons and training purposes. You should not therefore assume that any information held on the computer is private and confidential to you.

Email

1. Your email address can receive emails from anyone connected to the Internet. Used correctly it is a facility that is of assistance to Employees. Inappropriate use however may cause many problems including distractions, distress to others, time wasting and legal claims. This procedure sets out the Council's position on the correct use of the E-Mail and the Internet.
2. You should ensure that your correspondents know that they should not send you "humorous" or illegal attachments such as pictures or executable programs. Personal emails should be dealt with outside of normal office hours and all external non-work-related email messages should be deleted on receipt. Anyone found with offensive or pornographic material on his or her computer will be subject to investigation, which could result in disciplinary action and dismissal for gross misconduct.
3. If you receive an email from an unknown source, or "junk" email you should delete this from your system immediately without opening it as it may contain a virus.
4. Emails may contain file attachments. These should not be opened unless they are received from a trusted source, i.e. from another known Council, Employee or representative. If in doubt, ask the Clerk.
5. Emails to customers, suppliers and other business contacts should be restricted to Council business. Confidential information about or relating to the business of the Council, its customers, suppliers or contacts should not be transmitted outside the Council via email unless done so in the course of business. You should ensure there is no infringement of copyright when adding attachments to emails.
6. Confidential information should not be left on display on an unattended workstation.
7. You should be aware that deleted emails may remain held on the system for some time and may be accessible from back up if required for investigation of complaints of systems abuse.
8. You must not distribute sensitive commercial data concerning the Council to competitive sources. Doing so may result in disciplinary action leading to dismissal without notice for gross misconduct.

Guidance for appropriate use

9. Email is a non-secure medium and care should be taken when composing, sending and storing messages.
10. Email should be regarded in the same way as any other business communication and should be treated as a Council record. You should adopt a style and content for email, in

particular, those sent to external recipients that present a professional image. It is recommended that you adopt the same standards for email as for letters and memos, although the style may be more informal.

11. Confidential information about or relating to the business of the Council, its customers, prospects, suppliers or contacts should not be transmitted outside the Council via email unless done so in the course of business and sufficient steps are taken to safeguard security.
12. Employees must take reasonable steps to guard against unauthorised access to, alteration, accidental loss, disclosure or destruction of data.

Inappropriate use

13. You must not send internally or externally or obtain material (whether in the form of text or images) which is libellous or defamatory, illegal, obscene, sexually explicit, bullying, discriminatory or disparaging of others particularly in respect of their race, national origins, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious or political beliefs.
14. You are reminded that material that you find acceptable might be offensive to others. It is recommended that you take care and give sufficient thought to what you send. Messages can be misconstrued and should not become a substitute for "one to one" conversations. You should not send humorous material to business contacts. It can frequently be misunderstood or cause offence. In particular, the Council recommends that criticisms or complaints are not dealt with by email.

Examples of inappropriate use include, but are not limited to:

1. Sending, receiving, downloading or displaying or disseminating material that insults causes offence or harasses others.
2. Accessing pornographic, racist or other inappropriate or unlawful material.
3. Engaging in on-line chat rooms, on-line gambling sites, social networking sites or blogging . For example Facebook. (Note: Facebook and other relevant applications can be used for the purpose of conducting Council business when appropriate)
4. Forwarding electronic chain letters or similar material.
5. Downloading or disseminating unauthorised materials.
6. Transmitting confidential information about the Council or its customers externally and not in the course of the Council's business.
7. Downloading or playing computer games.
8. Copying or downloading unauthorised software.

Serious instances of inappropriate use may be considered gross misconduct and lead to dismissal.

Internet access

Internet access is granted for business reasons only during working hours. Usage is limited to work related activities. The availability and variety of information on the Internet has meant that it can be used to obtain material considered to be offensive. If an employee is unsure about what constituted acceptable Internet usage, then he/she should ask his/her supervisor for further guidance and clarification.