



INTERNET, EMAIL & SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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Policy Coverage

- The Council provides employees with email and internet access as required for the performance and fulfillment of job responsibilities and usage should be restricted to these activities.
- Employees are prohibited from using their own personal devices or software on Council owned systems, due to the risk of virus spreading.
- Access to the internet (including social media) or to email via the Council's systems for non-work related purposes is only permitted in exceptional circumstances provided that it does not interfere with work performance or security or is within an allotted break time and at the express permission of the Clerk.
- All PC's, laptops and all communications and stored information sent, received, created on, or contained within is the property of the Council.

Monitoring and Privacy Issues

- Monitoring of emails, social media and internet usage will be undertaken should the reputation of the Council be in question.
- The extent of such monitoring will be made clear, including password protected documents and deleted items.
- The monitoring of emails will only be undertaken when the Council can identify a justifiable reason; the Council being subject to Article 8 of the Human Rights Act creating a right to respect private and family life.
- Should monitoring identify potential breaches of the Policy this will lead to formal disciplinary action and serious breaches may amount to summary dismissal for gross misconduct.

Email Etiquette for Employees and Councillors

- Councillor emails - once issued no other email address should be used for council related business.
- Agreed email signatures to be used: councillor surname initial @harlington-pc.gov.uk
- Appropriate business language to be used.
- Waiver clauses at the end of each email message (each councillor will need to cut and past the office waiver into their signature box);
- No offensive, indecent or obscene material or anything which breaches the Equal Opportunities Policy to be circulated.
- No libellous, offensive, discriminatory, or inappropriate content to be circulated.
- Emails, unless clearly indicating the need for public circulation, should be treated as confidential.
- Attachments and size of documents to be unlimited if work related.
- No personal email is acceptable.
- Double check the recipient's address is correct.
- Check whether replying "to all" is appropriate.
- Guidance on saving, filing and photocopying emails - key documents to be saved to the computer.
- Councillors should be aware that they have a responsibility under the Freedom of Information Act to produce emails as requested.

Unacceptable behaviour on the Internet

- Allowing non-authorised users to access the internet using employees log in or while logged on.
- Visiting internet sites that contain obscene, hateful, pornographic, or otherwise illegal material.
- Passing on such material to colleagues or external people.
- Using the computer to perpetrate any form of fraud, or software, film, or music piracy.
- Using the internet to send offensive or harassing material to other users.
- Downloading commercial software or any copyrighted materials belonging to third parties unless this download is covered or permitted under a commercial agreement or other such licence.
- Hacking into unauthorised areas.
- Undertaking deliberate activities that waste staff effort or networked resources.
- Introducing any form of malicious software into the corporate network.
- Gambling on-line.
- Disclosure of any confidential corporate information without express consent.
- Any other area that the Council reasonably believes may cause them problems.
- The Council internet is not to be used to access any social network sites with the exception of the Council's Facebook page and the Clerks Forum on Facebook.

Social Media

- Entries entered on social media sites which have a detrimental impact on the Council or colleagues will lead to formal disciplinary action.
- Employees are also prohibited from naming the Council they are employed by on personal sites or discussing internal council matters on such sites.
- Accessing such sites for non-work-related purposes should also be prohibited during working hours.
- Personal blogs/social media such as Facebook/Twitter must not be linked to the Council's website or Facebook page.
- Publishing defamatory and/or knowingly false material about the Council, its employees, members, colleagues and/or customers on social networking sites, 'blogs' (online journals), 'wikis' and any online publishing format is unacceptable behaviour.

Consequences of Breaches

- Serious breaches of the Council's rules on email, internet and social media usage will be treated as gross misconduct. Apart from disciplinary action this could include withdrawing access to the internet for private purposes during work time.