



Email Usage Policy

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Owner	John Pritchard	Distribution	ICT & MRU	Classification	Unclassified

Document Control

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It is UNCONTROLLED when printed. You should verify that you have the most current issue.

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Author(s)

Names	Role
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Document Log

Version	Status	Date Issued	Description of Change	Pages affected	Review
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1. Introduction

Whilst the Council encourages employees to become familiar with the medium of e-mail it is expected that it be used primarily for Council business. However with regard to personal use, employees are expected to use discretion and common sense in its usage. Taking this approach will help Council operations to run efficiently without a heavy policing/monitoring policy.

2. Aim

The Council views e-mail as an essential tool for employees. However improper use of this tool can expose the Council to technical, commercial and legal risks. The aim of this policy document is to:

- Inform Council employees of the e-mail policy to minimise the Council's exposure to these risks.
- Inform Council employees what they can and cannot do.
- Inform Council employees of the legal risks involved in the usage of e-mail.
- Inform Council employees of the possible consequences involved in the failure to comply with the e-mail policy.

3. Scope

3.1 Within Scope

All employees including members and any one representing Herefordshire Council, who has been provided with internet access facilities by Herefordshire Council.

4. Permitted and Prohibited Uses

Employees may use the Council's e-mail system for Council use subject to the rules in this policy. Employees may also use the e-mail system for personal use provided that such use is kept to a reasonable level and does not interfere with business efficiency. Personal use of e-mail which may involve any risk to the Council or its employees, through civil or criminal action, or which may bring the Council into disrepute, is not permitted.

5. Breaches of Security

Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action and possible termination of employment. Illegal activities may also be reported to the appropriate authorities.

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6. Offensive, Illegal, Defamatory Materials and Misuse

Under the provisions of the 'Defamation Act (1996)', Council employees must not download, send, receive or view any materials that will cause offence to any person by reason of:

- Any sexually explicit content.
- Any sexist or racist remarks.
- Remarks relating to a person's sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion, disability or age.
- Council employees are to comply with the Equal Opportunities Policy which also applies to e-mail communication.
- Council employees are not to access, download, send, receive or view any materials that they believe or have reason to suspect are illegal.
- Council employees are not to send or circulate any materials via e-mail that contain any negative remarks about other persons or companies unless they are certain it is factually correct. If in doubt, do not send it.
- E-mail is defined in two ways in this context: communications with people outside Herefordshire Council using a user's council e-mail address (a.n.other@herefordshire.gov.uk. etc), and private e-mail accounts (hotmail, etc)
- E-mail must not contain indecent, obscene or libellous material, material likely to cause offence or any material which harasses any other employee or third party on the basis of sex, race or disability or any other areas mentioned in the Council's Corporate Equal Opportunity's Policy:
- Email users must not send or deliberately attempt to receive e-mail known to contain a virus or malware.
- Email users must not use e-mail for gambling, conducting illegal activities or soliciting for personal profit.
- Email users must not reveal or publicise information, which is confidential either to the Council or its customers and clients.
- E-mail chain letters or virus hoaxes must not be forwarded. If there is any doubt about the nature of any correspondence received by a user then that user should consult the ICT Services Helpdesk immediately on ext: 0160.

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- Email users may not access the internet using the logon credentials of another user.
- Email users should only send official information by Internet e-mail, which they would be prepared to send on the Council's headed paper.
- Scanned signatures **must not** be attached to Internet e-mails. Such signatures can be disseminated by recipients and fraudulently attached to other documents purportedly in the name of the Council.
- E-mail attachments should not be opened unless the recipient knows whom they are from or is expecting to receive them.
- It is possible for e-mail messages sent via the Internet to be accessed by people other than the intended recipient. It should therefore only be used for information which is not commercially sensitive or covered by the Data Protection Act (1998).
- You must never send and payment card data via email, this includes but is not limited to credit and debit card numbers.
- When sending protected or restricted data via email you should always include the classification within the subject header.
- You must not use Council email accounts for personal profit; this includes but is not limited to sending out advertising to colleagues.
- If sending encrypted or password protected attachments via email you must never include the password with the original attachment.
- You must never send files larger than 25mb via email, if you have a requirement to send large files, please contact ICT Services for advice.

Before forwarding e-mail to a new recipient, make sure you read the entire earlier messages, as they could contain personal comments that should not be redistributed.

Failure to comply with this policy may result in the Council being held liable for what is written by its employees.

Any person receiving unsolicited e-mails, or e-mail from any source that may derive suspicious activity, are to report the matter to the IT Helpdesk.

7. Monitoring

The Council reserves the right to monitor and inspect any e-mails sent by their employees using the Council's e-mail system, including personal messages at any time without notice. Such monitoring is intended to ensure that this policy is being complied with, is effective and that the Council and its employees are acting lawfully.

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Council employees should have no expectation of privacy when using the Council's e-mail system; other methods of communication should be used for any private messages.

8. Confidentiality and Sensitive Information

Employees are reminded that e-mails are not a secure way of sending information.

Employees are to be aware that e-mail messages, like paper-based documents, are admissible in court so therefore may be produced in legal proceedings.

9. Viruses

Non-text e-mail attachments (e.g. software, computer games, executable files, vbscripts and bitmaps – i.e. .tif, .gif, .exe and .vbs) may contain computer viruses or other harmful content that can seriously disrupt the Council's computer systems. These type of attachments are automatically checked by automated anti-virus software deployed on the Council's IT systems.

Any employee who knowingly distributes a computer virus or any harmful code using the Council's e-mail system will be subject to disciplinary action.

10. Unauthorised access

Employees are not to disclose their user password to any other person unless Senior Management or the Information Security Manager authorises them to do so.

Employees are not to impersonate any other employee when sending an e-mail nor are they to amend any received messages.

Employees are responsible for the security of their computer and e-mail box and must not allow it to be used by an unauthorised person. This includes locking the workstation when not in use so that casual overlooking and unauthorised tampering is prevented.

11. Housekeeping

The following rules are designed to assist Council systems to operate more efficiently. All users are to comply with the following:

- If employees receive a wrongly delivered message it is to be returned to the sender; if the e-mail message contains confidential information, the recipient is not to divulge or disclose that information to any other person.
- Messages are to be deleted on a regular basis/at weekly interval or stored in suitable electronic folders.
- Printouts are to be kept to a minimum and are to be protected according to the sensitivity of their content.
- If any user needs to distribute e-mail to 'all-users,' they should contact either the ICT Helpdesk or the communications unit after receiving approval from their Head of Service.

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- Employees are to minimise use of e-mail for trivial or personal messages as they lead to congestion of the e-mail system and reduce its efficiency.
- Users are to use the 'out of office function' when away from their place of work for a day or more.
- Heavy graphics or large PowerPoint presentations should be compressed before sending via the e-mail system.

12. E-Mail Disclaimer

All e-mails, whether sent internally or outside the Council, must include a confidentiality warning. The user can format the email to include this, but it should be set up when the IT Services engineer first configures a PC. The wording is standard across the Council:

“Any opinion expressed in this e-mail or any attached files are those of the individual and not necessarily those of Herefordshire Council. This e-mail and any attached files are confidential and intended solely for the use of the addressee. This communication may contain material protected by law from being passed on. If you are not the intended recipient and have received this e-mail in error, you are advised that any use, dissemination, forwarding, printing or copying of this e-mail is strictly prohibited. If you have received this e-mail in error please contact the sender immediately and destroy all copies of it.”

13. Modification

The Council reserves the right to modify this Policy having given employees reasonable notice.

14. Other Relevant Policies / Council Documents

This Policy must be read in conjunction with any specific instructions issued for each information facility, and the following supporting documentation:

- Corporate Information Security Policy
- Internet Usage Policy
- Email Usage Policy
- Data Sharing Policies/Procedures
- Incident Response Procedure
- Information Security Procedures
- Telephony policies
- Employee Code of Conduct
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15. Review Date

01/06/2010

16. Compliance

ICT Services will help to ensure compliance by reviewing requests for new ICT equipment.

17. Impact on the Council's Key Priorities

The Council must maintain good information security to ensure continued legal compliance and customer satisfaction.

18. Monitoring Arrangements

ICT Service may monitor the network and devices attached to it for compliance to this policy.

19. Training and Awareness Requirements

Anyone who needs training on information security or information management should contact either the information security team by contacting the ICT Helpdesk or emailing infosec@herefordshire.gov.uk or the records management service for further information on mru@herefordshire.gov.uk

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Equality Impact Screening Tool

To be completed and attached to any procedural document when submitted to the appropriate committee for consideration and approval.

		Yes/No	Actions
1	Has any base line data been collected on your policy / function and analysed?	No	It has been accessed that this is not appropriate in this case
2.	Does the policy/guidance affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:	No	
	Race		If yes, is this justifiable, legal and valid? Give reasons.
	Disability		As above
	Ethnic origins (including travellers)		As above
	Nationality		As above
	Gender		As above
	Culture		As above
	Religion or belief		As above
	Sexual orientation including lesbian, gay and bisexual people		As above
	Age		As above
3	Is it relevant to the general duty under the equality legislation (1. eliminating discrimination 2. promoting equality of opportunity, 3, promoting good relations)	No	
4	Is the impact of the policy/guidance likely to be negative?	No	If yes, why and what actions are you going to take?
5.	What alternatives are there to achieving the policy/guidance without the impact?	N/A	
6.	Can we reduce the impact by taking different action?	N/A	
7.	Is there any public concern that the function and policies are being operated in a discriminatory manner?	No	
8.	Depending on the above answers does a full impact assessment need to be carried out?	No	
9.	How is this policy going to be monitored and by whom?		It will be monitored by the Information Security Team conducting spot checks and using automated tools such as LANDesk.

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If you have identified a potential discriminatory impact of this procedural document, please refer it to the Corporate Diversity Team who can advise on how to complete a full impact assessment with suggestions as to the action required to avoid/reduce this impact.

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Rural Issues Checklist

Each policy should be assessed against two criteria:

- a) does it have a significant or not significant impact on rural communities. - No
- b) does it have a positive or negative impact on rural communities. - No

Rural issues are identified below – this list is intended to be a guide not all issues will apply to any one document.

- 1) Protecting/enhancing local facilities and shops
How does the policy affect rural facilities such as village shops, post offices, pubs, garages, other retail outlets, village halls, banks, churches and community enterprises? Can policies be amended to protect or enhance such facilities?
- 2) Maintaining/improving access to services
Does the policy impact on access to and maintenance of services for the rural population, particularly for less mobile groups such as the elderly?
- 3) Improving transport links and options
Will the policy affect transport links and options for commuting, accessing services and recreation? Are different modes and uses of transport considered?
- 4) Tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion
Does the policy affect any disadvantaged groups e.g. elderly, people with disabilities, homeless people, unemployed, women or ethnic minorities? Does it have an impact on sources of information and advice, social services, health, community development and capacity building?
- 5) Providing activities/facilities for young people
Will the policy impact on young people and how?
- 6) Improving employment opportunities
Will the policy impact on employment opportunities and how?
- 7) Strengthening/diversifying the rural economy
Does the policy affect the rural economy? Will it affect market towns, business support, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, retail, credit sources, community enterprises, farmers markets, training, ICT or start-up premises?
- 8) Provide affordable, quality rural housing
Will the policy affect the affordability and quality of housing across all types of tenure? Does the policy relate to prices, registered social landlords, developers, planning policies, migration, second homes, the elderly or special needs? Does it enhance sustainable communities?
- 9) Protecting/enhancing the local environment
How does the policy affect the protection and/or enhancing of the local natural and built environment? How sustainable is this?
- 10) Developing education and training opportunities/facilities
Does the policy impact upon education and training? How does it affect schools, colleges, ICT, access via local facilities or through transport or distance learning?
- 11) Promoting the use of and access to ICT
Will the policy have an impact on the use of and access to ICT?
- 12) Encouraging recreation and tourism
Does the policy affect recreation and tourism? Will it have an impact on rights of way, access to the countryside, recreational activities, local heritage, culture, villages and market towns?

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If you have identified a potential discriminatory impact of this procedural document, please refer it to the Director of Public Health together with any suggestions as to the action required to avoid/reduce this impact.

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Environmental (GEM) and Sustainability Checklist

The overarching questions here are

- How will this document impact on our outstanding natural environment?
- Is what is proposed sustainable in the long term?

		Response	Any changes proposed as a result of impacts identified
1	What effect will the document have on carbon/greenhouse gas emissions ¹ ?	None	
2	How will the operation of the document impact on natural systems? ²	None	
3	What effect will the document have on the use of resources ³ ?	None	
4	How would the operation of the document be affected by predictable changes, such as a more unstable climate or increases in the price of oil ⁴ ?	None	
5	Are there sufficient resources for the provisions set out in the document to be carried out for the foreseeable future?	None	
6	What effect will the document have on the character of Herefordshire in terms of landscape, buildings, street scene, biodiversity & use of land?	None	
7	Does the policy enable people to take more responsibility and build their capacity for positive response?	No	

Please contact the Sustainability Unit if you would like support on either:-

- How to assess impacts the document may have or

¹ Carbon/GHG emissions result from energy use in buildings, transport & release of other pollutants

² Impacts could include fragmentation or degradation of natural habitat, increased water runoff, potential for pollution, threatening environmental limits

³ Including selection and purchase of materials and costs of disposal

⁴ Climate change is likely to lead to hotter summers and more frequent extreme weather events.

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- How to adjust the document to reduce negative impacts you have identified – or increase positive benefits.

Please send the completed checklist together with the title and brief description of the assessed document to the Sustainability Unit (gem@herefordshire.gov.uk) ahead of the document's final approval.

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