

# Guidance on the Use of IT by Members

## 1. Purpose of Guidance

- 1.1 The Council provides Councillors with funding for computer facilities to use at home to facilitate the performance of their duties as Councillors. This protocol sets out the conditions on which such computers are provided, in order to minimise those risks both to the Council and to individual Councillors.
- 1.2 Each Councillor is required to sign a copy of this protocol as a condition of being provided with computer facilities and must comply with the terms of this protocol. For this purpose, "Computer facilities" means the facilities for which a grant is provided to a Councillor so that these may be used in the Councillor's home, and includes any equipment, software or materials provided for use with the computer.

## 2. Security

- 2.1 The Councillor is responsible for:
  - (a) reasonable arrangements for the safe-keeping of the computer; and
  - (b) ensuring that no-one else is given access to Council systems or any password which provides such access.

## 3. Use for Council Business

- 3.1 The computer is provided to facilitate the discharge of a Councillor's functions on behalf of the Council. A Councillor must therefore not use the computer in any manner which will prevent or interfere with its use for that purpose.
- 3.2 Accordingly, the Councillor must not misuse the computer or install or use any equipment or software which would adversely effect the Council's network.
- 3.3 The Council funds computer facilities necessary for the Councillor's functions on behalf of the Council. The Council will therefore not fund further equipment or material for use which is or appears to be required for private (non-Council) purposes.

## 4. Use for Private Purposes

- 4.1 The Councillor is able to use the computer facilities for private and family purposes, but is responsible for their proper use.
- 4.2 If a Councillor uses the computer for the preparation of any material of a personal or political nature, he/she must make it clear that such material is published in a private capacity and not by or on behalf of the Council, and that no costs have been incurred by the Council as a consequence of its publication. Similarly, a Councillor should not express views on any matter relevant to the Council without expressly indicating that the views are personal and not those of the Authority. If a Councillor wishes to use the

computer for any non-Council business use, it is the Councillor's responsibility to obtain any necessary software licences.

- 4.3 The Council accepts no responsibility for such private use of the computer or any loss, costs or liability which the Councillor or any other person may suffer as a result of the use of the computer.

## **5. Bringing the Council into Disrepute**

- 5.1 The Councillor shall not use facilities funded by the Council, or permit their use, in any manner which may bring the Council or the Councillor into disrepute.

- 5.2 In particular web-sites by Councillors themselves, should not include material which is unlawful, defamatory or likely to cause offence or bring the Council into disrepute.

- 5.3 Councillors should at all times be aware of the appropriate use of the internet and do nothing which is illegal or inconsistent with the high standards of behaviour which the community expects of those in public office.

## **6. Inspection and Audit**

- 6.1 The Council reserves the right to inspect the computer at any time. The Councillor is required to give Council officers access at any reasonable time for such inspection and audit, which may be undertaken remotely and without notice to the Councillor. Councillors are advised that the computer includes a history file which records its use, and particularly any websites which it has accessed.

## **7. Costs**

- (a) The Council will make an annual grant towards the cost of computer facilities to meet the Council's network requirements. This amount will be subject to regular review;
- (b) Each Councillor is responsible for his/her own electricity bill; and
- (c) If the Councillor wishes to make use of the computer for extensive private e-mail or internet access, such telephone time will be on the Councillor's own telephone bill and will not be reimbursed by the Council, other than through the Basic Allowance.

## **8. Confidentiality**

- (a) Councillors will be able to access confidential Council information using the computer. The Councillor is responsible for ensuring the continued security of any such confidential information received, including the security of any storage of such information on the computer. The Councillor is reminded of his/her obligations under the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors not to disclose such confidential information to any third party; and

- (b) Some of this information will be personal information relating to individuals. The unauthorised processing or disclosure of such information is prohibited under the Data Protection Act and the Councillor is responsible for ensuring that there is no such unauthorised disclosure from their computer.

**9. Restriction of Use**

9.1 The Council reserves the right to restrict the use of the computer if it has reason to believe that the use of the computer is likely to offend any provision of the Protocol. In particular, the Council reserves the right to:

- (c) remove or disable any software or equipment; and
- (d) remove any information stored on the computer.

**Signed by the Councillor on receipt of a grant:**

**Date:**