DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

STAFF DOCUMENTS SERIES

EMAIL and INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

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DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

E-MAIL AND INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

Email Acceptable Use

1. Introduction

E-mail is widely used to help manage and deliver our services. Users should read this policy alongside the Council's other IT policies, the relevant codes of conduct (including the Code of Conduct for Employees).

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees, including those working from home or from other locations, and councillors;

- Other workers (including casual and agency workers, secondees and contractors) using the Council's equipment and networks.

All existing users and new employees having access to the system will be required to have been provided with access to this policy prior to being granted access.

3. Policy statement

The Council encourages users to make effective use of e-mail. Such use should always be lawful. It should not compromise the Council's information and computer systems nor have the potential to damage the Council's reputation. Users must comply with this policy as a condition of access to e-mail facilities.

4. Appropriate use

The Council expects all users to use e-mail responsibly and according to the following conditions:

4.1 Personal use

E-mail is an important tool in the management and delivery of Council services and this is its main purpose. Personal use of e-mail is permitted providing that:

- Personal use is made only outside actual working hours and for limited periods.

- Users do not run private businesses using the Council's facilities.

- Users make it clear to the intended recipient that the message is sent by the user in their personal capacity, not in their capacity as a representative of the Council.

- The conditions applying to business use in paragraph 4.2 are followed in respect of all personal use.

This policy also applies to the use of all internet mail providers.

4.2   Business use

Use of e-mail is subject to the following conditions:

- Users should read the e-mail guidelines in the Annex to this document before using e-mail and should make sure that their use of it follows this guidance.

- E-mail is never completely confidential or secure. Messages appear to be temporary by nature but they can be widely distributed and easily restored from backup copies. E-mail messages have the same status in law as written correspondence and are open to the same legal challenges. Users must therefore apply the same standards to e-mails as they do to written correspondence. All external emails will have an automatic disclaimer.

When using e-mail the following must be borne in mind:

- Users must not commit the Council to purchasing or acquiring goods or services unless authorised to do so.

- Users should be cautious about any e-mail that asks the reader to send it to others. Where there is any room for doubt, please speak to your line manager.

- Users must not forward e-mail chain letters but should delete them.

- Users must comply with the Data Protection Act when placing personal data in messages or attachments.

- Users must not download software without specific permission.

4.3   Inappropriate use

Users must not access, display or circulate any information in the following categories:

- Pornography (including child pornography)
- Gambling
- Promoting discrimination of any kind
- Promoting racial or religious hatred
- Involving threats or promoting violence
- Promoting illegal acts
- Any other information which may be offensive to colleagues

Incidents that appear to involve deliberate sending or receiving of e-mails that contain the following material will be reported to the Police:

- Images of child abuse (images of children, apparently under 16 years old) involved in sexual activity or posed to be sexually provocative

- Adult material that potentially breaches the Obscene Publications Act in the UK

- Criminally racist material in the UK

4.4   Accidental access to inappropriate material

If an e-mail containing inappropriate material is opened accidentally it should be sent to the Town Clerk who will discuss the matter which the Council's IT support provider.

5.0   Monitoring

The Council's system filters junk and profane e-mail to improve efficiency and enforce this policy. Users who receive this sort of e-mail should contact their line manager who will investigate whether the filtering can be improved. Managers may inspect any e-mail correspondence to see if users are complying with the policy. Any potential misuse identified from monitoring will be dealt with and may result in dismissal.

Internet Acceptable Use

1.   Introduction

The internet is widely used to help manage and deliver our services Users should read will have been provided with access to this policy and the Council's other IT policies and the relevant codes of conduct (including the Code of Conduct for Employees).

2.   Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees, including those working from home or from other locations, and councillors;

- Other workers (including casual and agency workers, secondees and contractors) using the council's equipment and networks.

All existing users and new employees having access to the system will be required to have been provided with access to this policy prior to being granted access.

3.   Policy statement

The Council encourages users to make effective use of the internet. Such use should always be lawful. It should not compromise the Council's information and computer systems nor have the potential to damage the Council's reputation.

4.   Appropriate use

The Council expects all users to use the internet responsibly and according to the following conditions:

4.1   Personal use

The internet is an important tool in the management and delivery of Council services and this is its main purpose. Personal use of the internet is permitted providing that:

- Personal use is made only outside actual working hours and for limited periods.

- Users do not run private businesses using the Council's facilities.

- The conditions applying to business use in paragraph 4.2 are followed in respect of all personal use.

- Regular and extensive personal use of the internet may result in disciplinary action. Whether or not this use has been during work time will be taken into account.

4.2   Business use

Use of the internet is subject to the following conditions:

- Users must not commit the Council to purchasing or acquiring goods or services unless authorised to do so.

- Employees may join, and publish to, newsgroups of professional interest or relevant to their work with their line manager's approval.

- Users must comply with current Data Regulations when placing personal data in newsgroups and on web sites.

- Users must not download software other than static files e.g. Word documents, PDFs, but not applications or activeX controls.

- Users must comply with licence terms and conditions when copying or downloading material covered by copyright law.

- Information on the internet is not always accurate so users must verify information before use.

4.3   Inappropriate use

Users must not access, display or circulate any information in the following categories:

- Pornography (including child pornography)
- Gambling
- Promoting discrimination of any kind
- Promoting racial or religious hatred
- Involving threats or promoting violence
- Promoting illegal acts
- Any other information which may be offensive to colleagues

Incidents that appear to involve deliberate access to websites, newsgroups and on-line groups that contain the following material will be reported to the police:

- Images of child abuse (images of children, apparently under 16 years old) involved in sexual activity or posed to be sexually provocative

- Adult material that potentially breaches the Obscene Publications Act in the UK

- Criminally racist material in the UK

4.4   Accidental access to inappropriate material

Any user who inadvertently enters a site which could be deemed unsuitable must report it to their line manager.

5.0   Monitoring

The Council's IT systems allow for the use of the internet to be monitored and this may be done to see whether users are complying with the policy. Any potential misuse identified may amount to gross misconduct and may result in dismissal.

END

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

E-MAIL GUIDELINES

For most of us, sending an e-mail is an everyday event, but there's more to it than rattling out a message and clicking the 'Send' button.

Think carefully about the wording of any e-mails, especially if they are going to a wide audience. For example:

- Make it clear who you are and why you are e-mailing. Do not assume that the recipients will know who you are and why you are contacting them.

- E-mails going to a large audience, especially if it includes outside organisations and councillors, should be formal so avoid sounding chatty and casual.

- Always check that you are sending the e-mail to the correct person before hitting 'Send'. If you use the 'Reply To All' button your e-mail will be sent to everyone who was copied into the original message.

Here are some basic rules for writing and sending an email:

➢ **Stay cool**

Be very careful how you express yourself, especially if you feel heated about a subject. E-mail lacks communication context such as facial gestures and tone of voice and you can easily convey the wrong impression.

➢ **Read before sending**

A minute spent reading through an e-mail before you send it can catch all kinds of silly mistakes. It can also give you a fresh perspective on something you thought was a good idea when you wrote it but perhaps is less clever in hindsight.

➢ **Communication at the speed of light**

Check your e-mail regularly. Ignoring an e-mail message is discourteous and confusing to the sender. Always reply promptly, even if a brief acknowledgment is all you can manage.

➢ **Where to, Guv?**

A misaddressed letter might get to its intended destination if it's handled by a vigilant postman but a misaddressed e-mail will get bounced right back to you. Worse still, it may get sent to someone else entirely and, depending on what you're sending, that can have all manner of repercussions. Always double-check what you type in the address box.

➢ **" "**

The first anyone sees of an e-mail is an entry in their inbox and, if there's no subject, the only way of knowing what the e-mail is about is to open it. If you get five e-mails a day this isn't a big deal,

but if you get 50 it's a real time waster. Worse still, subject-free e-mails make inbox management a nightmare, since there's no way to quickly distinguish one e-mail from another.

➢ **DON'T SHOUT**

IN ONLINE AFFAIRS, ANYONE WHO ONLY WRITES IN CAPITAL LETTERS IS CONSIDERED TO BE SHOUTING.

Quite apart from the fact that shouting when you should be talking is rude, all-caps e-mails are difficult to read, so keep the Caps Lock key off.

The same applies to text in Bold *and/or italics.* Only use them to highlight a particularly important part of the message that you want to emphasise.

➢ **Please be polite**

E-mails are great for casual communication but that doesn't mean that every communication should be casual. Start your e-mails with a greeting and sign off with a goodbye. Messages that omit either can come across as abrupt and brash.

➢ **Chek yor speling**

E-mails that are riddled with spelling mistakes are e-mails from sloppy, thoughtless people who couldn't care less – or at least that's the impression they convey. A spellchecker can be found in the 'Tools' menu.

➢ **Who are you?**

Always end your e-mails with your name and if it's an e-mail to someone who doesn't already know who you are give your full name and job title.

➢ **Blink and we'll miss it**

Just because your e-mail application can send messages in inch-high, flashing red letters that look like they've been written in crayon on flock wallpaper, it doesn't mean you have to. Messages in simple, plain text work best.

Fancy effects just make e-mails slower to send and receive, and recipients with e-mail applications that can't understand them will just see lots of empty space.

➢ **Have an air of detachment**

E-mailing a file to someone as an attachment is incredibly handy but it pays to think before you click the 'Send' button.

Not everyone has a super fast broadband internet connection and not everyone wants to spend two hours downloading a large file which they may not want in the first place. Always check with the recipient before you send a large attachment.

END