



Whitchurch Town Council

WHITCHURCH TOWN COUNCIL

ICT POLICY (September 2013)

Foreword

Whitchurch Town Council will make the most of innovative new technology to make its services more efficient and accessible, particularly where the cost of change is outweighed by the benefits. Our ICT (Information & Communications Technology) Policy has been produced to make clear how we will develop and control our computer systems.

Introduction

The Council uses its computer network, software packages and the internet, (including e-mails), to further the efficiency of its business and to provide the best service possible to its customers, partners and the public. Any disruption to the use of these facilities will be detrimental to the Authority and may result in actual financial loss. This Policy sets out how the Council intends to regulate the use of these facilities.

The Council has a duty laid down in the Data Protection Act 1998, to ensure the proper security and privacy of its computer systems and data. All users have, to varying degrees, some responsibility for protecting these assets. Users also have a personal responsibility for ensuring that they and the staff they supervise, comply fully with this policy – See also the Council's Information and Data Protection Policy.

For the purposes of this document the terms "computer" (or "computer system") and "computer data" are defined as follows:

"Computer" (or "computer system") means any device for automatic storing and processing of data and includes mainframe computer, minicomputer, microcomputer, personal computer (whether hand-held laptop, portable, tablet, standalone, network or attached to a mainframe computer), workstation, word processing system, desk top publishing system, office automation system, messaging system or any other similar device;

"Computer data" means any information stored and processed by computer and includes programs, text, geographic, pictures, video and sound.

General Operation

- All hardware, software, data and associated documentation produced in connection with the work of the Council, are the legal property of the Council.
- The Council will maintain an external support contract for the hardware, major items of software and provision of internet facilities.
- The Council will not knowingly breach copyright of another person.
- The Council will include an assessment of risks from its use of IT in its Business Risk Assessment.
- The Council will routinely back up its essential data off site.
- The Council will make a detailed inventory of its ICT equipment on its Asset Register.
- The Council will consider the location of equipment and provide documentation to ensure optimum physical security.
- The Council will maintain a record of training to each individual user.
- The disposal of any ICT equipment, software, waste or data must be authorised, undertaken safely and securely and be properly documented.
- The Council will standardise where possible on Microsoft standard software
- Maintain a Recovery Plan in case of loss, corruption or damage to ICT equipment, software or data.

Compliance with Legislation

The Council's policy in respect of the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 is set out in its Information and Data Protection Policy.

Under the Computer Misuse Act 1990, the following are criminal offences, if undertaken intentionally:

- unauthorised access to a computer system or data;
- unauthorised access preparatory to another criminal action;
- unauthorised modification of a computer system or data;

All users should be made aware that deliberate unauthorised use, alteration, or interference with a computer system or its software or data, whether proprietary or written "in-house", will be regarded as a breach of the Council policy and may be treated as gross misconduct. In some circumstances such a breach may also be a criminal offence.

It is an offence under the Copyright, Design and Patent Act to copy licensed software without the consent of the copyright owner. All copying is forbidden by the Act, unless it is in accordance with the terms and conditions of the respective licence or contract.

Security

Consideration must be given to the secure location of equipment and documentation to help safeguard the Council's ICT assets. Portable equipment must be locked away when not in use and must not be removed from the premises without permission.

Only persons authorised by the Town Clerk may use Council computer systems. The authority given to use a system will be sufficient but not excessive and users will be notified that the authority given to them must not be exceeded.

Operating procedures are required to control use of ICT equipment. Access to the Computers is subject to a password, which is periodically changed. Levels of encryption will be maintained according to risk.

Further development of appropriate secure data storage, off site back up of data, and recovery plans will be a priority for review.

Virus Controls

Viruses are undesirable pieces of computer code that can corrupt systems, equipment and data. They are a serious, increasing threat to the computer systems of the Council. All computers and servers will have loaded and operate the Council's standard virus detection software for scanning discs, memory sticks and fixed drives. Discs and memory sticks of unknown origin should not be used in the Council's computers.

No software should be loaded onto the Council's equipment without the permission of the Town Clerk.

If a virus is suspected, the equipment should be switched off and isolated and the Council's support contractor should be contacted.

Misuse

This Policy applies to the activities which constitute unacceptable use of the network operated by the Council. The policy applies equally to employees, councillors, clients, visitors and others who may be allowed to use the facilities on a permanent or temporary basis. All misuse of the facilities is prohibited including specifically but not exclusively the following:

1. The creation or transmission of any offensive, obscene or indecent images, data or other material or any data capable of being resolved into obscene or indecent images or material.
2. The creation of material which is designed or likely to cause annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety.
3. The creation or transmission of defamatory material.
4. The transmission of material in any way that infringes the copyright of another person.
5. The transmission of unsolicited commercial advertising material to networks belonging to other organisations.

6. Deliberate actions or activities with any of the following characteristics:

- Wasting staff effort or networked resources
- Corrupting or destroying another users data
- Violating the privacy of other users
- Disrupting the work of other users
- Other misuse of networked resources by the deliberate introduction of viruses
- Playing games during working hours
- Private use of the facilities without specific consent
- Altering the set up or operating perimeters of any computer equipment without authority

World Wide Web (WWW) resources

These facilities are provided for use to achieve Council objectives. Any use for unauthorised purposes will be regarded as gross misconduct. If you are unsure whether use would be authorised, you must seek advice from the Town Clerk in advance.

Health and Safety

Computers are now a part of everyday life. If they are not used correctly, they can present hazards. Computers may be called Display Screen Equipment (DSE), Visual Display Units (VDU's) and the immediate environment where they are used i.e. desk/chair etc. is referred to as a workstation.

The Display Screen Equipment Regulations, 1992 regulate the use of computers at work and refer to the persons affected as "users". "Users" are persons who "habitually use VDU's as a significant part of their normal work and regularly work on display screens for two/three hours each day or continuously for more than one hour spells". The Regulations also apply to employees working at home.

It is important that a correct assessment of your workstation is done to highlight any problems that must be reported to your supervisor - this can be done using the Workstation Assessment Questionnaire. Completed Questionnaires should be returned to your Manager.

If you are a "defined computer user":-

- Your workstation must be designed for computer use. There must be sufficient space to position your keyboard so that you can rest your wrists in front of it;
- The screen should be fully adjustable and must be positioned to avoid glare from lights, windows etc.;
- Your chair must be of the fully adjustable type with five castors and must be adjusted to support your lower back. It must be set at the correct height for your desk. Your feet should rest on the floor and you may need a footrest;
- Report eyestrain, headaches or aching limbs to your manager. The Council will pay for your eye test if you are a defined user;
- Ensure your computer has an adjustable keyboard;
- Ensure your working environment is comfortable. Problems with ventilation, temperature or lighting should be reported to your Manager.

Protocol for the use of Whitchurch Town Council's Website.

Background

The Town Council website was developed on a model by Shropshire Council and is hosted by Shrop.gov It will be redesigned and made more interactive in line with the Communications & Marketing Strategy and have a recognisable design link with the Town Website. The Council currently pays a contractor to add or remove information, and this will be reviewed when the site is upgraded.

The Town Council currently has no control over the design of the Website, but may add its own topic keys on the left-hand side and control the contents of these and the Town Council front page.

Future Additions

There is a lot more current and historical data which the Council intend to add to at least bring it to conformity with its Publication Scheme Information Guide.

Editorial Control

The Assistant Town Clerk & Town Centre Manager has been given editing rights for the Town Council site and only she or the Town Clerk can add, delete and amend information on the Town Council site.

Quality is important to the image of the Council. Remember: Anything that we publish on the web, we should be happy to see published in a local newspaper!

Editorial Content

Information needs to be accurate and in accordance with Town Council Policy.

The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity – updated in 2011 must be taken into account when matters of publicity are concerned, more details are provided in the Council's Communications & Marketing Policy. Basically we are allowed to publicise the contact details of individual councillors, positions they hold and can publicise individual proposals, decisions and recommendations but must keep information objective and not use Council funds to mount campaigns intended to persuade members of the public to hold a particular view on a question of policy or party politics

Updating the Site

The site will be updated at least weekly. It is important that the site remains fresh, relevant and current.

Web Links

We will place important links on our Website to make it as easy as possible for visitors to find out information about the Town and its organisations. We will also approach other bodies for them to have links to our site.

Social Media

We are now introducing social media, as we recognise it is the fastest growing communications and sales media. We will introduce apps for Town Centre information and send out latest news.

Sharing Technology

We will work and share technology with Shropshire Council and other local bodies where appropriate. We will combine ICT resources where possible with Shropshire Council in the Community and Service Hub.

Sharing information with and between Councillors

As much information as possible is provided to councillors electronically. Forthcoming guidance from the Department of Communities & Local Government will clarify any uncertainty around the distribution of summonses, agendas and minutes. Drop-box is used to help the delivery and updating of large documents.

Councillors historically print as necessary themselves, however it is at times necessary for councillors to print large documents and this facility is offered in the office. The Council will in the future need to review these arrangements, along with the possibility of more useable technology provision, Council specific email addresses and advice on the security of confidential information made available to councillors.