

# PART 5 - CODES AND PROTOCOLS

## SECTION C

### IT CODE OF PRACTICE FOR MEMBERS

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is committed to e-governance and has accordingly agreed to provide IT equipment to all members of the Council who require it to ensure this aspiration can be achieved. For this aim to be achieved all members of the Council have to be readily accessible by e-mail and be able to receive information electronically. In recognition of the importance the Council views this provision, the Council has adopted the IT Code of Practice as part of the Members' Code of Conduct.
- 1.2 The sections of this document provide important information regarding the Council's protocol for computer usage. Failure to follow the guidelines detailed in this Code of Practice could lead to the computer facilities being withdrawn and/or a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

#### 2. Equipment and Software

- 2.1 The Council is only responsible for the control and maintenance of computer equipment provided by the Council. No responsibility or work will be undertaken on computer or telephony equipment not provided by the Council. Members using their own computer equipment will be responsible for the cost and maintenance of the computer.
- 2.2 All equipment and software provided by the Council remains the property of the Council at all times. The computer provided is solely for the use of the Council Member for whom the equipment is provided and is not to be used by other members of the household, friends or relatives.
- 2.3 The Member is responsible for keeping the equipment provided in a good condition, subject to fair wear and tear. Due care must be undertaken to keep the provided equipment safe and secure, particularly with regard to laptop computers. The Council's insurance policy covers provided equipment for accidental damage and loss.
- 2.4 The Council's authorised officers or appointed contractor shall be permitted by the Member to enter his/her home at a mutually agreeable time to access the equipment if there is a fault with the equipment, a need to upgrade or update the equipment or software, or if the Council reasonably believes this Code of Practice has been broken.
- 2.5 The Member must return all the equipment and software supplied by the Council, if the Member ceases to be a Member of the Council, or on request by the Council, if the Council is satisfied that the Member has broken this Code of Practice. The equipment should be returned, or made available for collection as soon as possible and within one month of the above circumstances occurring.

- 2.6 Computer equipment provided by the Council must not have any hardware or software applications installed or removed and the original installation must not be modified. All software programs installed on the computer are licensed by the Council and may not be copied. The transfer of data files, such as documents and spreadsheet files, via disc or USB device is permissible.
- 2.7. Where a telephone line has been supplied by the Council, this will be for the connection of the computer and Council provided fax printer only. The telephone line should not normally be used for voice calls.
- 2.8. Waste computer output must be disposed of with due regard to its sensitivity. Printed output with confidential or personal details must be shredded.

### **3. Training and User Guides**

- 3.1 The ICT Service or the Council's appointed contractor will provide training on the use of the provided computer equipment and software. Training can also cover areas such as security, printing and private use.
- 3.2 User notes are normally provided for e-mail and internet usage. Additional assistance and training can be provided on request through the ICT Service.

### **4. Passwords**

- 4.1 Passwords must be kept secure and must not be disclosed to anyone, except to authorised ICT staff or the Council's appointed contractor, where required. Passwords must not be written down or displayed in any way that would allow the password to become known to others.

### **5. E-mail and Internet Usage**

- 5.1 The Internet and e-mail facilities provided by the Council Internet should be mainly used for Council business. Council business is defined as "business which is applicable to the work officially undertaken for the Council, applicable to the professional body associated with such work or which assists the Member with carrying out his/her duties as a Councillor". Limited personal use of the Internet and e-mail by Members is permissible subject to the restrictions imposed below.
- 5.2 The Council will provide an official e-mail account, for each Member, using the domain name of [surreyheath.gov.uk](mailto:surreyheath.gov.uk). This e-mail account should be used for all official and work related e-mail sent and received by the Member. Web based e-mail accounts such as Hotmail and Yahoo should not be used for Council business.
- 5.3 Instant messaging (IM) services such as MSN or Yahoo must not be installed or used on Council provided computers, unless there is a specific work requirement to do so. Any such installation shall be subject to the prior written approval of the Head of Information and Communications Technology.
- 5.4 As a Member of the Council it is important that an appropriate language and style of communication is used. External e-mails should be presented in a manner which is compatible with the Code of Conduct. E-mail sent to outside organisations should include councillor's full name, position within the Council and a telephone contact number.

- 5.5 Abusive, harassing or defamatory remarks, fraudulent or obscene messages or materials must not be used within e-mail messages or attachments. The sending or forwarding of chain letters, text jokes, joke images or other forms of mass mailing is also prohibited. Members should always be aware that material that they personally may find inoffensive, could be offensive or hurtful to others.
- 5.6 Unacceptable uses of the Internet include, but are not limited to:-
- (i) the downloading, transmission or posting of any material which is pornographic, obscene, threatening, insulting or otherwise offensive in nature.
  - (ii) personal use for product advertisement, commercial activities or political lobbying.
  - (iii) any unlawful or illegal activities.
  - (iv) any other activity which, under the Code of Conduct, would bring the Council into disrepute.
- 5.7 E-mails should be acknowledged promptly and responded to in accordance with the Council's Customer Care Standard.
- 5.8 Care should be used in subscribing for e-mail newsletters, bulletins or newsgroups, as this can allow the Council-provided e-mail address to be used to receive spam e-mail.
- 5.9 All external outgoing e-mail will be appended automatically with the Council's standard disclaimer.
- 6. E-mail Retention**
- 6.1 All e-mail sent and received through the corporate e-mail system have been automatically archived since January 2005 and will be retained for a minimum of 6 years.
- 7. Software Licensing**
- 7.1 The Council operates software-licensing controls and deliberate downloading of unauthorised software from the Internet is strictly forbidden. Authorised downloads would normally only include documents designed for viewing or printing. Internet Browser plug-in programs are required to view the contents of some web sites and may be downloaded, but only if the site cannot be viewed without the additional software being installed.
- 7.2 To ensure licence conditions are complied with, no software shall be installed on Council provided computers without the prior written authorisation of the Head of Information and Communications Technology.
- 8. Virus and Spyware Protection**
- 8.1 All computers required to connect into the Surrey Heath network from an external location **MUST** have virus and spyware protection software and a firewall installed, to protect the computer from virus infection and hacking. Computer equipment provided by the Council will be pre-installed with virus and spyware protection software and a firewall, which will be automatically updated at regular intervals. Members using the computer are strongly advised to check that the virus and spyware protection software is being updated at regular intervals. If updates are not being downloaded

automatically, the Member should inform the ICT Service or the Council's appointed contractor as soon as possible.

- 8.2 Members using their own equipment MUST ENSURE that any computers used to connect to the Surrey Heath network have virus and spyware protection software and a firewall installed. ICT Services will provide details of suitable software and firewalls upon request. The Member will be responsible for all costs associated with the purchase and ongoing support of the virus and spyware protection software and firewall installed on their own computer. The virus and spyware protection software and firewall MUST BE maintained and kept up to date at all times, with the software being configured so that updates are automatically downloaded from the Internet at regular intervals.
- 8.3 Incoming and outgoing e-mail sent through the Council's e-mail system is automatically checked for computer viruses and any e-mail containing a virus will be blocked and not passed onto the intended recipient.

**9. Monitoring of Internet and E-mail**

- 9.1 Where the Council supplies the computer equipment, the Council reserves the right to monitor Internet and e-mail usage, if the ICT Service or Audit Service suspect that abuse may have occurred.

**10. Abuse of the Code of Practice**

- 10.1 Breach of the Code of Practice may result in access to the Council's computer network being withdrawn and any Council-owned equipment being removed.