



**Nottinghamshire
County Council**

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COUNCILLORS INTERNET AND E-MAIL POLICY

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TO ALL COUNCILLORS

“Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) continues to place increasing reliance on its computer systems and networks.

Everyone within NCC has a responsibility to control risk and to report errors in judgement or procedure where they see them. Doing so reduces our exposures and helps to maintain our client image.

This policy document has been agreed by Administrative Committee. It outlines your responsibilities in respect of the computer systems you use. Adherence to it is each Councillor's individual responsibility.”

Wilful or negligent disregard for these policies will be investigated and may be treated as a disciplinary matter.

R A Latham

Chief Executive

COUNCILLORS INTERNET AND E-MAIL POLICY

Introduction

Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) recognises that e-mail and Internet services are critical to the work carried out by Councillors. Indeed, many of our citizens, partners and suppliers have an expectation that they can deal with us through these mediums. As such, the Council provides Councillors with access to e-mail and Internet services in order to assist you in carrying out your duties.

E-mail and the Internet are also key components in central government targets for the delivery of Electronic Government.

Why a policy?

The formulation of this policy was motivated by a need to develop guidelines to ensure that Councillors can realise the electronic capabilities as a resource, with the provision that they are responsible in how they access or transmit information.

Acceptable Use

As a general principle, Internet access and e-mail facilities are provided to Councillors to support work on Council related activities. The following list, although not intended to be definitive, sets out broad areas of use that the Council considers to be acceptable:

- to provide a means of communication with other Councils, agencies, organisations and constituents;
- to view and obtain information in direct support of the County Council's business activities;
- to promote services and products provided by the County Council;
- to communicate and obtain information in support of approved personal training and development activities;
- any other use that directly supports the work of a Councillor;
- a limited amount of personal use.

Unacceptable Use

In general terms, any use of the Internet or e-mail which contravenes any legal Act (for example, The Data Protection Act 1998; The Freedom of Information Act 2000; The Computer Misuse Act 1990; The Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act 1988; The Obscene Publications Act 1959 and 1964); or any internal County Council policy (in particular, Council policies on Equal Opportunities and Harassment) is unacceptable.

Etiquette and User responsibilities

The Internet as a whole does not have any central management or control. However, in order to maintain some standards of behaviour, the Internet community has developed a set of written ethics known as "netiquette", which outline conventions and rules of conduct when using the Internet and e-mail. It is recommended that you take time to read the netiquette guidelines which can be found on the County Council Intranet.

As a general principle, Councillors are representatives of the County Council, using Council equipment and are accessing a non private network. They should have regard for County Council policies and legal requirements when using the Internet.

Your e-mail

The content and maintenance of a Councillor's electronic mailbox is the Councillor's responsibility. Either take responsibility for the e-mail account yourself or delegate access to a secretary or similar officer employed by the Council.

Do:

- consider whether you need an individual e-mail account or make use of a generic group e-mail address e.g. group@nottscc.gov.uk.
- check your e-mail daily.
- delete unwanted messages since they take up disk storage.
- keep messages remaining in your electronic mailbox to a minimum.
- mail messages can be downloaded or extracted to files then to disks for future reference.
- mark personal e-mail by including the word 'personal' in the subject line.

Don't:

- reply to junk mail – responding confirms your address is 'live' and you may receive even more.
- assume that your e-mail is private. Others may be able to read or access your mail.
- send or keep anything in your e-mail account that you would not wish to have published.

Downloading Software

The Council provides equipment with pre loaded, standard, supported software which will assist Councillors in undertaking their duties. In theory, there should be no need for a Councillor to download software. Be aware that downloaded software is a major source of virus infection and may lead the individual into a minefield of licensing and copyright issues. For these reasons you should contact the Head of Members Services who will check existing guidelines before downloading or installing software.

Monitoring

Internet and e-mail use may be monitored. Any computer may be called in for checking at any time and may be subject to review by Internal Audit.

Breaches

Breaches of this policy will be referred by the Head of Members Services to the appropriate body or person and Councillor concerned will be informed.