

## ANGUS COUNCIL

PERSONNEL & PROPERTY SERVICES COMMITTEE - 2 MAY 2000  
FINANCE & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE - 2 MAY 2000

## E MAIL &amp; INTERNET POLICY

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL AND DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

**ABSTRACT**

This report incorporates a suggested E Mail and Internet Policy for adoption by Angus Council.

**1. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

The Committees for their respective interest :

1. Approve the terms of this report
2. Approve adoption of the attached E Mail and Internet Policy

**2. INTRODUCTION**

Organisations are making increasing use of E Mail and Internet facilities in the conduct of their business. Misuse of these facilities has raised awareness amongst organisations of security risks and loss of productivity and, in particular, of the increasing number of legal actions arising from misuse of electronic communications such as E Mail and the Internet.

Consequently, organisations are now introducing written policies which provide guidance and give clarity on usage, encourage good practice, and ensure users are aware of their legal implications.

**3. PROPOSAL**

The attached Policy, which it is proposed be adopted, has been developed to ensure proper and consistent use of E Mail and Internet/Intranet facilities within the Council.

The Policy and associated guidelines, also attached, set out guidelines on acceptable use of Council facilities and are designed to safeguard both the Council and employees.

Subject to Committee approval it would be proposed to distribute the Policy and the Guidelines to all E Mail and Internet/Intranet users.

**4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with the terms of this report.

**5. CONSULTATION**

The Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Director of Law & Administration have been consulted on the terms of this report. The Chief Officer's Management Team and the Trade Unions have been consulted on the terms of the Policy.

JANICE TORBET  
Director of Personnel

ANDY GREENHILL  
Director of Information Technology

**NOTE** No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

## ANGUS COUNCIL

### E-MAIL AND INTERNET POLICY

#### Introduction

Angus Council makes increasing use of e-mail and Internet/Intranet facilities in the conduct of its business. As in other forms of business communications it is essential that proper and consistent use is made of these facilities. This policy has been developed to establish guidelines on acceptable use of Council e-mail and Internet/Intranet facilities. The policy applies to all Council employees using Council owned or provided e-mail and Internet/Intranet facilities.

The policy is designed to safeguard both the Council and employees. The Council recognises there is an increasing number of legal actions which arise from misuse of electronic communications such as e-mail and the Internet/Intranet. It is further recognised that while the Council could be held liable for a defamatory statement made by an employee even in an internal e-mail message, liability applies to all "publishers" and therefore the employee could also be held to be directly liable in damages.

#### Authorised Use

The e-mail system and the Internet/Intranet are available for use on matters directly concerned with the work of the Council.

However, infrequent use of the facilities is permitted for personal purposes subject to the approval of the appropriate manager. Personal use will be monitored and recovery of the cost of such use will be in accordance with procedures determined by the Director of Finance.

#### Unauthorised Use

Use of the facilities for purposes clearly in conflict with the interests of Angus Council is forbidden and in particular the Council will not tolerate the use, or attempted use, of the facilities for :

- any message that could constitute bullying or harassment e.g. on the grounds of sex, race or disability
- jokes, cartoons, chain letters or games
- online gambling
- accessing pornography
- downloading or distributing copyright information
- downloading software applications without approval
- posting confidential information about other employees, the Council or its customers or suppliers
- private commercial purposes
- placing of orders for goods and services with external suppliers
- misuse of Council assets or resources and misappropriation or theft of intellectual property
- Chat Groups, Newsnet Group Membership

Access or attempted access to material considered unsuitable will be monitored by the Council's filtering software which will also monitor external e-mails. Where appropriate details of the monitoring process will be made available to the appropriate Chief Officer.

## **User Responsibilities**

- Use the facilities in accordance with this policy and operating procedures determined by departmental management.
- Ensure that critical information is not stored solely within the e-mail system. Hard copies must be kept or stored separately on the system. The filing of hard copies of important documents may be a legal requirement and the maintenance of accessible file records is a major corporate necessity.
- Maintain the confidentiality of their unique individual password.
- Do not access the e-mail system using another employee's password without prior authorisation.
- Ensure copyright and licensing laws are not breached
- Be aware of, and operate in accordance with, the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

## **Chief Officer Responsibilities**

- Determine any operational procedures for the use of facilities - these procedures may include access, usage, distribution and filing mechanisms.
- Ensure current virus protection software is installed on the equipment being used.
- Ensure employees are familiar with the e-mail system and its uses and where appropriate ensure employees attend the familiarisation training run by the Personnel Department.
- Ensure that breaches of this policy are investigated and where appropriate disciplinary action taken in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

## **Director of Information Technology Responsibilities**

- Manage the provision and availability of the e-mail system and the Internet/ Intranet.
- Issue advice on all aspects of this policy.
- Be responsible for any constraint or restriction in usage or access for technical reasons.
- Approve the use of executable software received as an attachment to external e-mail or downloaded from the Internet.
- Monitor the use of the facilities and provide appropriate reports to management.

*Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action including summary dismissal.*

*Any employee who feels they have cause for complaint as a result of any breach of this policy should raise the matter initially with their immediate manager. If necessary, the complaint can then be raised as appropriate through the Grievance or Harassment at Work Procedures.*

## **General Guidelines relating to the Policy**

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Policy. They are designed to both explain the reasons for the content of the policy in relation to the use of e-mail and also outline accepted use and good practice of the Council's e-mail and Internet/Intranet facilities.

### **Business and Private Use**

The facilities have been established for business use and as such are regarded as another method of communication in addition to the more traditional telephone and written correspondence. As such many of the procedures and protocols surrounding these methods are directly transferable to the use of Internet and e-mail facilities. It is important to remember at all times when using the facilities that use and the contents of any material associated with it are identifiable with Angus Council. For that reason the Council expects the same high standards as are applicable to other areas of Council activity to apply equally to the use of these facilities.

The Council also recognises that limited use of the facilities for personal purposes should be available. However that personal use will be subject to all aspects of the policy as laid out in the Policy document.

### **Monitoring Procedures**

Access to the Internet using the Council network is filtered through software installed by the Director of Information Technology. The procedure also logs attempted access to material deemed unsuitable or sexually explicit. Details of the logging process will be made available to management in the event of disciplinary proceedings. In order to safeguard both the Council's and the individual's position all external e-mail transactions are also monitored on an ongoing basis.

### **Financial Regulations**

The Financial regulations of the Council require the procurement of all goods and services on behalf of the Council to be conducted through the submission of an official purchase order. For this reason the use of Internet or e-mail facilities for procurement on behalf of the Council is not currently permitted except where actioned by the Director of Finance.

### **Security**

The Council holds and uses very large quantities of information much of which is of a confidential or sensitive nature. It is essential that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that the information is protected from inappropriate disclosure or attack from external sources. The Council and indeed each individual employed by the Council is bound by the Data Protection Act and in order to protect not only personal data as defined by the Act but also each individual employee of the authority the transfer of such information using the facilities is not permitted.

With the growth of electronic access to and interchange of information with external organisations the need for increased security has increased substantially. The Council has implemented a virus protection policy but such is the nature of the problem there are also a number of actions which all users should take to further enhance the security of Council

information and facilities. Attachments received via e-mail can be prone to containing viruses which can be difficult to detect. Care should be taken when such documents are received from external organisations and individuals. For similar reasons software should not be downloaded from the Internet and executed without the approval of the Director of Information Technology.

Any suspicion that a virus exists within the Council infrastructure must be reported to the Director of Information Technology immediately.

Do not rely on the external e-mail to send urgent items as the delivery is beyond the control of Angus Council.

### **Confidentiality Statement**

All external e-mail messages must contain a confidentiality statement which will be appended automatically to all external e-mail messages from the Council. The standard message for the Council is given below.

" The information contained in or attached to this e-mail is confidential and is intended for the exclusive use of the addressee(s). If you have received this message in error, do not use or rely on the information, but please contact Angus Council at [it@angus.gov.uk](mailto:it@angus.gov.uk) or telephone 01307 473901".

### **Using e-mail to communicate**

E-mail isn't always the best way to communicate. Sometimes things are better said on the telephone or in person rather than trying to compose your dialogue into an e-mail message. Always consider which medium is most appropriate.

### **Housekeeping**

Read your e-mail at least once a day; others may be sending you mail assuming it will be read at least daily. If you are going to be away from the office ensure that either your mail is read by an authorised colleague or use the Out of Office Assistant to advise senders of e-mail of your absence.

Don't let too many messages build up in your folders; delete them if you do not need to refer to them again. Bear in mind that physical deletion of messages involves removal from the Deleted Items Folder but remember the need for filing in accordance with departmental procedures.

Keeping a large number of messages in your folders can result in disk space problems on the servers which can seriously degrade the performance of the system not only for you but also for everyone else. If there are a large number of messages to which you wish to continue to refer these should be transferred to personal folders on your PC and the originals deleted from the mailbox folders on the mail server.

Do not use e-mail for critical correspondence or use mail folders as your only filing system. The filing of hard copies of important documents may be a legal or audit requirement and the maintenance of accessible file records is a major corporate necessity.

## **Broadcasting Messages to all internal e-mail Users**

Everyone at some time or another has received unsolicited advertising material or "junk mail" and most people find it extremely irritating to receive such material. E-mail's ability to quickly send a message to a large number of recipients often leads to the temptation to "broadcast" messages across the system. While the message may be important to you not all the recipients may find it so. For this reason as well as a number of technical considerations the broadcasting of messages is not permitted across the Council e-mail system.

Where this effect is desired the message should be transmitted to departmental mail boxes (eg FINANCE, HOUSING etc) with a request that the department in turn forward it to all staff in that department.

## **Attachments**

Attaching word processing documents and spreadsheets to mail messages can be extremely useful. However attaching large documents such as manuals or large reports will delay mail delivery to all users across the network. A physical limit on message sizes (including attachments) is in place to minimise disruption of network performance. When attaching files and documents to e-mail messages always attach them at the end of the e-mail immediately prior to sending the message.

An important point to remember when attaching documents is that your version of Word or Excel may be different from those used by the recipient. To overcome these difficulties it is recommended that transmitted documents should be standardised as Word 6/95 and Excel 4.0 formats.

