



Policy 16 – Electronic Communications

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Council Minute No: **76/19**

Statutory Authority: **Various State and Federal laws**

Related Policies: **Social Media Policy**
Customer Service Charter

OBJECTIVE

To ensure that Council's image and that of Elected Members, employees and volunteers are protected from inappropriate use of email and internet facilities.

POLICY

Objective

To ensure that all Elected Members, employees and volunteers (users) are aware of the minimum standards to apply to the use of the Internet and individual email addresses provided by Council and their responsibilities when using these facilities.

Application

This policy shall apply to all users of internet and email systems provided by Council, including Elected Members, all permanent, temporary and casual staff, volunteers and any contractors who are given access to Council's electronic systems.

Principles of Use

The provision of these facilities is intended to provide benefits to Council including:

- Improved communications between individual and groups within Council;
- Improved ability of staff to access information relevant to their work;
- The ability to distribute information more quickly both internally and externally; and
- Presentation of a professional and dynamic face to the public and other organisation with which we deal.

Internet access is a privilege, not a right, and the Council will view the visiting of non work related sites during working time as a serious issue that may lead to disciplinary action.

Users should also be aware that some internet sites contain material that is illegal within Australia, and as such the accessing of such material may be a criminal offence under Australian law.

Accessing or distributing material that is based on sex, disability, race or other identified group can be seen as harassment, and as such will not be tolerated. Users found to have accessed such material will be subject to disciplinary action.

Remember that accessing any site on the Internet leaves a record (audit trail) that can be followed.

Responsibilities of Users

Any users of internet and email services provided by the Council are required to be aware of, and agree to, the following:

- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of other users and the rights of copyright owners.
- Remember that email facilities identify you as a Dorset Council representative and your opinions may be seen as those of the organisation. In light of this users should think carefully before becoming involved in electronic discussions, and if they do so should ensure that opinions are theirs and do not represent the views of the Council.
- As a rule, if in doubt do not view, download, display or send it.
- Email communications are subject to the same filing and record management processes as other documents. It is the responsibility of employees to ensure that copies are printed and placed on the respective files as necessary.
- All email received through Council facilities is the property of Council, and as necessary can be viewed by persons other than the recipient.
- The facilities are not to be used for the distribution of software or for the downloading of unauthorised material or files.
- Any downloaded materials must be checked for viruses before it is executed or opened.
- The facilities must not be used for illegal purposes, for assessing pornographic or other objectionable material, or for the individual's financial or commercial gain.
- Accessing of inappropriate material or sending of email of a racial, sexual or threatening nature can be viewed as harassment and if proven will result in disciplinary action being taken.

Personal use of Facilities

The primary object of the provision of internet and email facilities is to support other business activities, however subject to Director approval and system resource availability, private usage may be allowed as follows:

- Individuals are able to use the internet and email facilities in their own time providing this is agreed with their Director and does not impact adversely on the normal running of the computing systems.
- The responsibility will rest on individuals to ensure that these facilities are not abused and as such will require them to exercise personal judgement in their use of facilities.
- Users should remember that an audit trail of internet sites accessed and email sent is visible to Council and leaves a record on all sites that have been visited. The inappropriate or illegal use of the facilities has the potential to embarrass Council and could result in legal action against both individuals and the organisation. This can include investigation by external organisations such as Australian Federal or State Police and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.
- Supervisors and Directors will have responsibility for ensuring that users adhere to this Policy, and will have the ability to remove access from individuals who do not adhere to this Policy.
- The security and privacy of electronic communication cannot be guaranteed, and as such any loss incurred by any individual as a result of the private use of email or Internet systems will be the responsibility of the individual, not the organisation.

Managing Risk and Other Points to Remember

There are several other issues that users of Council email and internet facilities should consider and be aware of. These include:

- Email is not a secure form of information transmission and therefore should not be used to distribute information that is confidential.
- Importing information from outside the organisation has the potential to introduce viruses and breach copyright law. It is the responsibility of the individual to ensure that these are considered before downloading information.
- Information available on the Internet is not always reliable and as such should always be authenticated before it is used for Council purposes.
- Be aware that downloading of video and audio across the Internet has the potential to significantly affect the performance of the computer network.
- You should ensure that your password and user accesses are kept confidential. Remember that it is your individual name, as well as that of the Council that will be broadcast on the Internet.
- Users who use the Internet to make electronic purchases should ensure that data they submit is adequately protected and secure.

If any user has questions in relation to the content of this document, enquiries should be directed to the Director - Corporate Services. Any technical issues should be directed to the Information Technology Co-ordinator.