

POLICY ON THE ACCEPTABLE USE OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY

1 Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all users of the council's Information Systems (IS), Information Technology (IT) and associated data, software and services are clear about what is acceptable and unacceptable usage.

2 Scope of the policy

This policy applies to all aspects of the use of IS/IT, as defined in the attached Annex 1. It applies to any IS/IT used in pursuit of council business. If, in any circumstances, privately owned IS/IT facilities are used within council premises, then their usage must conform to this policy. If privately owned IS/IT facilities are used by any elected member or employee to communicate with the council or to undertake council business, then that usage must conform with this policy.

This policy applies to **all** Elected Members, Services, employees, and any other person permitted to use Highland Council IS/IT facilities.

3 Policy definition

3.1 Expectation of proper conduct

The operation of the council's IS/IT systems relies heavily on the proper conduct of the users, who must adhere to this policy.

3.2 Requirement to comply with legislation

The use of all IS/IT facilities must be made in compliance with all appropriate legislation e.g. Data Protection

3.3 Requirement to conform with all council policies

The use of all IS/IT facilities must be made in compliance with all council policies e.g. Security of I.S. Policy, Harassment at Work Policy.

3.4 Consequences of failure to comply with legislation or policies

If a user fails to comply with any legislation or policy, including any of the acceptable use provisions outlined in this document, use of the system may be withdrawn and future access may be denied. This may impact on the individual's ability to undertake the duties of their job.

Some violations may also constitute a criminal offence and may result in legal action. Any user violating these provisions, relevant legislation or Council policies, may be subject to loss of access, to the provisions of the Council's Disciplinary procedure and reported to the Police.

3.5 *Monitoring usage and access to systems*

The Council reserves the right to monitor, log and access all computer and network activity including Internet access and Email, with or without notice. Users should, therefore, have no expectations of privacy in the use of these systems.

Monitoring of usage and access to systems will be made with the authorisation of the Director of Information Systems.

3.6 *Acceptable Use*

The following criteria will be used to assess whether usage is acceptable:

- Be in support of business and service needs consistent with Service and Council policies
- Be in support of an individual's approved duties
- Be consistent with the regulations appropriate to any system or network being used /accessed
- May be for limited personal usage provided this is not associated with monetary reward, is undertaken in the users own time, is not interfering with the delivery of council services, does not violate this or any other Council policy and is a lawful activity.

3.7 *Unacceptable Use*

It is unacceptable for a user to use, submit, publish, display, download or transmit on or from the network or on any computer system any information which:

- Restricts or inhibits other users from using the system or the efficiency of the computer systems;
- Violates or infringes on the rights of any other person, including the right to privacy;
- Is contrary to the Council's Harassment Policy and Procedures
- Contains defamatory, false, inaccurate, abusive, obscene, pornographic, profane, sexually oriented, threatening, racially offensive, or otherwise biased, discriminatory, or illegal material;
- Encourages the use of controlled substances or uses the system with criminal intent; or
- Uses the system for any other illegal purpose.

It is unacceptable for a user to use the facilities and capabilities of the systems to:

- Conduct any non-approved business;
- Transmit material information, or software in violation of any local or national law;
- Forge a message to make it appear as if it came from another person
- Harass an individual or group of individuals
- Copy material which is protected by copyright laws;
- Conduct any unauthorised political activity;
- Conduct any non-Council-related fund raising or non-Council related public relations activities;
- Access or transmit information via the Internet, including email, in an attempt to impersonate another individual; or
- Make any unauthorised purchases;
- Conduct any other unauthorised activity.

Clarification of any of the above acceptable and unacceptable uses, should be sought from the line manager or the IS Client Team.

Should users indulge in unacceptable use as defined above they may be subject to disciplinary action under the Council's disciplinary procedures. In certain cases this may amount to gross misconduct e.g. accessing pornographic or obscene material which would normally lead to summary dismissal, subject to normal Disciplinary Procedures

3.8 Security

Access and usage of systems must be in accordance with the Council's Information Systems Security Policy.

In terms of acceptable usage a user must:-

- not reveal their account password or allow another person to use their account
- not use another individual's account
- not attempt to log on as another user
- notify the IS Service Desk immediately if they identify a security problem
- not show or identify a security problem to others
- take reasonable precautions to protect the Council's systems from security issues such as computer viruses
- use only properly supplied and authorised systems for undertaking council business

3.9 Etiquette

When using IS/IT facilities users must:-

- Be polite
- Not use vulgar or obscene language
- Use caution when revealing their address or phone number (or those of others)
- Be aware electronic mail is not guaranteed to be private
- Not intentionally disrupt the network or other users
- Abide by generally accepted rules of network etiquette

3.10 Internet & External and Internal E-mail

3.10.1 Purpose of the internet

The Internet (including external e_mail) is a global communications network which provides vast, diverse and unique resources. With access to computers and to people all over the world users can gain access to material that may not be considered to be of value to the Council. There may be some material or individual communications that are not suitable for everyone. The Council views information gathered from the Internet in the same manner as reference materials identified by the staff. Specifically, the Council supports resources that will enhance the business and service environment. Exploration and manipulation of resources is encouraged where this benefits the Council and staff development within their post. However, it is impossible to control all materials on a global network and users may discover inappropriate information.

Unacceptable access and the implications for the user are detailed in Section 3.7.

3.10.2 Access to the Internet

Access to the Internet and use of internal and external e_mail, is provided as part of the standard Office Service which is provided on every desktop system and is available through normal levels of authorisation (usually via line managers). Only hardware and software supplied in accordance with the council policy on The Supply of Information Systems is acceptable for Internet & Email access.

3.10.3 Filtering and access to inappropriate material

Access to the Internet via the Council's systems is "filtered" the intention being to prevent access to certain sites, for example, those containing pornography. The system, however, is not fail-safe and the Council cannot prevent the possibility that some users may access material that is not consistent with the policies of the Council, or in line with the employee's normal duties and responsibilities. Where material, which is not consistent with the policies of the Council, is inadvertently accessed, people are strongly advised in their own interest to report the matter to their line manager. If there is any doubt as to what constitutes inappropriate material, the user should seek advice from the line manager or the IS Client Team. If a user continues to access inappropriate material this will be treated as unacceptable access as per Section 3.7.

The system must not be used to send or receive illegal material. Illegal material includes, but is not limited to, unlicensed software. Software piracy is theft.

3.10.4 Accuracy and quality of information

The Council will not be responsible for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through its Internet connection.

3.10.5 Legal Commitments and E-Mail

E-mail can result in binding contracts. Users should be aware that legal commitments can result from their e-mails, and the same degree of care should be exercised as with any other written communication.

For evidentiary purposes, users should file hard copies of e-mails on paper files when these are maintained or otherwise ensure that e-mails which evidence commitments are suitably saved.

3.11 Dissemination of information

When disseminating views or opinions via the council's systems on subjects not directly related to their responsibilities in the council, users will ensure that any opinions or views expressed are not attributed to the council by inserting the following phrase:

“The opinions expressed herein are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the council”