



Central Bedfordshire Council

Members Acceptable Use Policy

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Not Protected

Policy Governance

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1. Introduction

The digital age brings with it many advantages as well as many threats. If used correctly, computer and telephony services can provide local authorities with the ability to serve its customers efficiently in an economical, secure, accessible and legally compliant manner.

Much of the Council's business is now conducted by electronic communication and Councillors are encouraged to routinely use ICT in the course of their duties. Central Bedfordshire Council is committed to ensuring that its elected Members can access the ICT equipment they need to carry out their duties as a Councillor.

It is Council policy for members to use either Council supplied ICT equipment or suitable ICT equipment provided by individual members. For the purposes of this document, the 'equipment' means any form of information and communications technology (ICT) equipment.

This policy applies to all Central Bedfordshire elected Members.

2. Telephony

For Members who use mobile phones we recommend the following best practice guidelines:

- store all mobile numbers in the sim card rather than the phone memory (unfortunately SIM's do not allow multiple numbers to be stored);
- ensure that a sim pin is entered and enabled and that no phone pin is used;
- do not divulge sensitive or confidential information unless you are sure of the other person's identity and are confident you can not be overheard; and
- do not use a mobile phone whilst driving.

3. Security of systems and information

Access to the Council's information systems via the equipment is subject to password security. The Councillor shall ensure that no one other than the Councillor is given access to those Council information systems and shall not reveal any such password to any other person.

Passwords will be changed every 30 days and the system will prompt Councillors to do so. Passwords must be a mixture of upper and lower case letters, include numbers and must be a minimum of 8 characters in length. You are expected to take all reasonable steps to ensure your password remains confidential to you.

All Council provided software is licensed only for use on the Council's equipment and must not be installed, copied, duplicated or used in any way other than that specified by the Council.

The Council regularly backs up systems and all the data held on them. However, it does not back up any information held locally. The Councillor is advised to back up any personal data held locally.

If any part of the equipment supplied ceases to function correctly, the Council will repair or replace it with another unit. Any private software or data may not be recoverable and the Council accepts no liability or responsibility for such loss.

All Councillors must use the 'Ctl-Alt-Delete' to lock their screens when they are out of view of their workstation. At the end of the day Councillors should choose the 'shut down' option and power down their machines, this requirement is essential for reasons of system backup.

4. Confidentiality

The Councillor may be able to access confidential Council information using the equipment and as such is responsible for ensuring the continuing security of any such confidential information that he/she receives, including the storage of such information on the equipment.

The Councillor is reminded of his/her obligations under the Council's code of conduct for Councillors not to disclose such confidential information to any third party.

Some of this information may be personal information relating to individuals. The unauthorised processing or disclosure of such information is prohibited under the Data Protection Act and the Councillor is responsible for ensuring that there is no such unauthorised disclosure from the equipment. Further guidance is provided in the Council's Data Protection Policy available on the intranet.

5. Software / hardware

Only approved, legal computer software may be used with Council ICT systems. For all Councillors who chose to use the Councils ICT provision all software and hardware has to be purchased and approved by the ICT service unless written permission is given to the contrary.

6. Virus checking

All computers have a virus scan system and this software must not be disabled. Please report any difficulties or identified viruses immediately to the ICT service desk. Until the issue is resolved the user must not use their PC.

PC equipment supplied by a member must be provided with a reliable virus checker updated regularly.

7. Mobile working

If taking Council equipment offsite please ensure where practical it is kept from public view as this decreases the chances of theft.

8. Private use

The Councillor may use the equipment for private and family purposes and may permit members of his / her immediate family to use the equipment for private purposes but is then responsible for their use of it.

The Council is prohibited from publishing any material of a party political nature. If the Councillor uses the equipment for the preparation of any material of such a nature, he / she must make it clear that such material is published in a private capacity and not by or on behalf of the Council, and that no costs have been incurred by the Council as a consequence of its publication.

Use of the equipment for business purposes is not permitted.

The Councillor shall not use any part of the equipment or, permit its use, in any manner which may bring the Council or the Councillor into disrepute. The Council reserves the right to remove or require the removal of any material that is unlawful, defamatory or likely to cause offence or bring the Council into disrepute.

Economic use of equipment will also make a cumulative contribution to reducing energy use and, ultimately, carbon emissions from Central Bedfordshire Council.

9. E-mail

Councillors must be aware of the following:

- An electronic mail message is not a confidential or secure means of communication, unless sent via the Government Connect system.
- E-mail has the same legal status as other paper and electronic media.
- The E-mail system should not be used to send racist or other discriminatory, pornographic, illegal, libellous or offensive material that might bring you, your service or the council into disrepute.

10. Audit

The Council reserves the right to inspect the equipment at any time. The Councillor is required to give Officers access at any reasonable time for such inspection and audit, which may be undertaken remotely and without notice to the Councillor. Councillors are advised that the equipment includes a history file, which records its use and particularly any websites it has accessed.

11. Ownership and safe keeping

Council supplied equipment is any equipment provided to the Councillor by Central Bedfordshire Council or by a predecessor Council. This equipment shall remain at all times the property of Central Bedfordshire Council

The Councillor is required to return the equipment to the Council upon ceasing to be a Councillor.

The Councillor shall make reasonable arrangements for the safe keeping and the safe operation of the equipment.

The Council reserves the right to require the Councillor to return the equipment at any time and the right to recover it from the Councillor.