



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

IT POLICY SUMMARY

(including staff guide for computer use)

INTRODUCTION

This IT Policy Statement refers to all types of electronic services accessed through Blyth Town Council's IT facilities. The term 'on-line services' includes Email, World Wide Web (WWW), FTP, TCP/IP and any other means of communication of a similar nature. 'WWW' means all materials which can be accessed through a Uniform Resource Locator address, including but not limited to HTTP and NEWS services.

WHY THIS POLICY EXISTS

Blyth Town Council is committed to defending the principle of the freedom of information and acknowledges that the use of the internet is a very valuable contribution to the exercise of that principle. Without compromising this, Blyth Town Council also aims to benefit from the internet by presenting the Council to the locality, region and world. The purpose of this IT Policy Statement is therefore to guarantee an appropriate use of the Computer Systems on site which is beneficial to all the Councillors of Blyth Town Council.

The conditions which apply to all usage of Council facilities, including computer hardware, smart phones, tablets, software, data, networks and access to the Internet, are clearly set out in the Council IT Policy, a copy of which may be obtained from the Town Clerk

PEOPLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Policy Scope

This policy applies to:

- ◆ All Councillors, staff and associates of **Blyth Town Council**
- ◆ All contractors, suppliers and other people working on behalf of Blyth Town Council
- ◆ To all who use the computer systems on council premises.

Responsibilities

All Councillors, employees, contractors, associates and suppliers must adhere to the following guidelines when accessing any of the computer systems on the council premises.

Any breaches must be reported to senior management, ie the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk.

DETAILS

Prohibited Use

Users of the Council's IT facilities must comply with the Council's policies and regulations governing these facilities.

The following activities contravene these regulations and are deemed a serious offence when using any computer connected to the Council network.

- ◆ Viewing or downloading any form of pornographic, racist or offensive material.
- ◆ Using email to send abusive, racist, offensive messages to anyone.
- ◆ Harassment of any person via email or text.
- ◆ Hacking.

Downloading material for research purposes that contravene these rules must obtain advance authorisation from the Town Clerk.

Accounts are monitored centrally for misuse. Where misuse is suspected then the account may be disabled.

Breaches of the IT Policy will be considered in line with disciplinary procedures.

Computer misuse

The Computer Misuse Act was introduced in 1990 to secure computer material against unauthorised access or modification. Three categories of criminal offences were established to cover the following conduct.

- ◆ Unauthorised access to computer material (basic hacking) including the illicit copying of software held in any computer.

Penalty: Up to six months imprisonment or up to a £5,000 fine.

- ◆ Unauthorised access with intent to commit or facilitate commission of further offences, which covers more serious cases of hacking
Penalty: Up to five years of imprisonment and an unlimited fine.

- ◆ Unauthorised modification of computer material, which includes:
 - Intentional and unauthorised destruction of software or data
 - The circulation of “infected” materials on-line
 - An unauthorised addition of a password to a data file
 Penalty: Up to five years of imprisonment and an unlimited fine.

You must not:

- ◆ display any information which enables others to gain unauthorised access to computer material (this includes instructions for gaining such access, computer codes or other devices which facilitate hacking)
- ◆ display any information that may lead to any unauthorised modification of computer materials (such modifications would include activities such as the circulation of “infected” software or the unauthorised addition of a password)
- ◆ display any material which may incite or encourage others to carry out unauthorised access to or modification of computer materials.

Copyright

The Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988 is applicable to all types of creations, including text, graphics and sounds by an author or an artist. This will include any which are accessible through the Council’s IT facilities.

Any uploading or downloading of information through on-line technologies which is not authorised by the copyright owner will be deemed to be an infringement of their rights.

Such uploading, downloading, transmission or storage of copyright material is only allowed on the Council's IT facilities within certain limits and only if it is for research for a non-commercial purpose under the “fair dealing” arrangements of the Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003. Non-commercial purposes include:

- ◆ work done by staff Councillors undertaking higher education outside their workplace
- ◆ work done by Councillors relating to council business
- ◆ work done for personal professional development.

In accordance with the Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Act 2002, if a visually impaired person uses the Council's IT facilities to make an accessible copy of any work that is not otherwise accessible to him or her because of the visual impairment, it is not an infringement of copyright in the work.

Some types of infringement give rise to criminal offences, the penalties for which may amount to up to two years imprisonment or an unlimited fine. It is also possible for the copyright owner to claim compensation or to have infringing activities prevented by an injunction.

You must not:

Make, transmit or store an electronic copy of copyright material, or a substantial part thereof, on the Council's IT facilities without the permission of the owner, particularly when doing so as part of a commercial purpose, examples of which include:

- ◆ company research and development
- ◆ market research
- ◆ articles for academic journals or papers for conferences for a fee
- ◆ Work done for third party companies.

Defamation

Defamation consists of the publication of opinions and untrue statements which adversely affect the reputation of a person or a group of persons. If such a statement is published in a permanent form, as is the case with statements published on the internet, an action for libel may be brought against those responsible.

In accordance with the Defamation Act 1996, Blyth Town Council is committed to taking all reasonable care to avoid the dissemination of defamatory material and it will act promptly to remove any such material which comes to its attention so far as is possible within the bounds of legislative freedom. Remember that even messages which have only one intended recipient may reach a vast audience through this medium. As a result, the transmission of statements which discredit an identifiable individual or organisation may lead to substantial financial penalties.

You must:

- ◆ ensure that all published facts are accurate
- ◆ ensure that opinions and views expressed in web pages or via bulletin boards do not discredit their subjects in any way which could damage their reputation

- ◆ obtain written approval from the Town Clerk before publishing or transmitting any potentially defamatory statement.

You must not:

- ◆ place links to Bulletin Boards that are likely to publish defamatory materials.

REMEMBER:

- ◆ **ANY EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS ARE PUBLICATIONS**
- ◆ **ANY SOCIAL MEDIA REFERENCING THE COUNCIL ARE PUBLICATIONS**
- ◆ **ANY INFORMATION YOU POST EITHER ONLINE OR BY EMAIL MAY BE REQUIRED TO BE USED IN RESPONSE TO A FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST**

Data Naming Convention

Following agreement with the Policy Working Group committee a naming convention will be put forward regarding files and folder structure on the shared drive. This is to include revisions, dates and possibly the author of the file. This is currently being discussed by management at the Council offices and will be put forward shortly.