

PROTOCOL FOR USE OF COUNCIL RESOURCES BY COUNCILLORS

Introduction

1. The purpose of this Protocol is to provide a guide to the use of Council resources by Councillors.

Resources provided to Councillors

2. The Council provides a range of facilities to support Councillors, such as stationery, photocopying, telephone, an email address and IT equipment (which includes any access to the Council's systems via any on-site or remote access link), to enable Councillors to carry out their duties as a councillor. Members must make sure that they use the Council's resources for proper purposes only and when using the Council's resources, Members must have regard to the Local Authority Code of Publicity and the Member Code of Conduct.
3. The Council is prohibited from publishing any material of a party political nature and Members should ensure that when using or authorising the use by others of the Council's resources, that such resources are not used for purely political purposes unless that use could reasonably be regarded as likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the Council or of the office to which the Member has been elected or appointed. Members may therefore use Council resources and facilities for political purposes in connection with the following business:
 - (a) holding ward surgeries;
 - (b) dealing with correspondence from constituents;
 - (c) communicating group activities;
 - (d) meetings between group members.
4. A Member's use of Council resources must not extend to political parties more generally.
5. The Council agrees to de minimis usage that would otherwise be contrary to this Protocol, but which is so small in extent, that a reasonable person knowing all the facts would take the view that it should not be thought of as to be included in what is being controlled, prohibited or otherwise included in this Protocol.
6. The use by a Member, of any Council resources for purely political purposes, including designing and distributing party political material produced for publicity purposes and support of any political party or group activity, elections and campaigning, is likely to amount to a breach of the Member Code of Conduct.
7. During the election period (which runs from the publication of the notice of election to the close of the polls), Members must not use their Council email address in any ward newsletters which contain election or campaigning material.
8. Provided that the use of any Council resource is not purely in connection with political purposes and there is no cost to the Council nor any liability for the Council arising from its use for secondary purposes, it is a matter for each individual Member as to whether or not they use it for private and family purposes. Members will however need to take into account any additional costs that may arise from extending software licences and the replacement of equipment (excluding marginal shortening of the life of items of equipment (for example modest use of a printer)). Members must also take into account security issues related to confidential information and the processing and disclosure of information under the Data Protection Act 1998.
9. Members are under an obligation to ensure that any secondary use of IT equipment supplied by the Council is acceptable and appropriate and that such use does not contravene the Member Code of Conduct, Council codes, protocols etc, the Misuse of Computer Act 1990 and any other relevant UK and European legislation.
10. Councillors supplied with a Council computer and internet connection facilities, must sign the Council's standard agreement for the use of IT and comply with the agreement.

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