

INTERNET AND EMAIL USAGE

DIVISION	BUSINESS UNIT	RESPONSIBILITY AREA
Corporate Services	Information Technology	Internet

OBJECTIVE: To ensure that the Council’s investment in computer hardware, software and services is used in the most productive manner to the greatest possible benefit of the Shire of Plantagenet.

To ensure that all the Shire’s business emails are preserved and available as corporate knowledge in accordance with the State Records Act 2000.

POLICY: **The Council will ensure that employee use of the Council’s internet and email systems are in accordance with the following:**

Email Content

1. All emails sent or received via the Shire’s email system are the property of the Shire, although the Shire does not accept responsibility for items of an informal nature that are transmitted through its system without consent.
2. Employees should only give their Shire of Plantagenet email address to people and organisations that are business partners of the Shire of Plantagenet.
3. No employee may send or distribute email containing non-business related material such as jokes. This includes sound files, (eg. WAV), movie files, (eg. AVI) or any form of such material.
4. No employee may send or distribute e-mail containing expletives or pornography or for sending messages that are abusive, obscene, libellous and insulting or in bad taste. Further discussion on the ethics of email use attached as an appendix to this policy.
5. No employee may send or distribute e-mail containing derogatory, inflammatory, insulting or libellous information about any other Shire employee, customer, associate or any other person whatsoever.
6. No Shire employee may conduct any business of a private nature via the Shire’s email/internet system other than legitimate Shire business.
7. Any Shire employee receiving questionable material (as described above in points 3, 4 and 5) should immediately forward all such material to the Chief Executive Officer or their supervisor for appropriate action and then delete all local copies.
8. Employees may not use email/Internet or electronic messaging systems to infringe copyright or other intellectual property rights of third parties.
9. All staff are required to protect the confidentiality provisions of the Shire, exercise due care and adhere to confidentiality agreements when handling data or information on or from the Council’s information systems.
10. Unauthorised advertising or promotion of products or services via the email/internet system IS NOT permitted.

11. Electronic records produced or received by an officer in the course of public duties are deemed to be public records. All such records shall be captured in accordance with the Council's Record Keeping Plan.
12. Staff are discouraged from e-mailing matters of a legal or contractual nature. This type of correspondence should be handled by written letter sent through Australia Post. Email is the preferred means of exchanging standard administrative and technical information and other informal correspondence. It should not be used for formal documents recording significant decisions or approvals or which otherwise warrant becoming part of the permanent record.
13. No attachment should be opened or stored unless the employee can positively identify the sender.

Monitoring Emails

The Shire has installed an e-mail management system. This system is capable of capturing all email business transactions and to trap and report all questionable e-mails. The Shire's employees should be aware that all emails are being monitored to ensure that this policy is being adhered to.

Consequences of Non-Compliance

Employees found to be acting in contravention of the above directives will be warned by the appropriate manager and requested not to re-offend. Employees who continue to disregard the above directives will be formally warned and then may face suspension pending court action and/or dismissal if the offence is considered to be of a serious nature.

Note – any offence associated with pornography or insulting behaviour will be automatically classified as being of a serious nature.

Whilst spam filters are in place, the Shire of Plantagenet is powerless to prevent any inappropriate e-mail being received at a particular email address, but it will in no way condone any pornographic or offensive email being forwarded on to any person; either as a knowing recipient of the material, or as an unknowing recipient of the material.

The Shire of Plantagenet considers such material totally inappropriate to the workplace and expects that any person who receives such material will immediately delete it from the system.

Should you receive such e-mail you should report this to the Chief Executive Officer or your supervisor, as it is our practice to advise the organisation that hosts the sender, that such email is being sent from their organisation and to request them to prohibit the sending of such e-mail to us.

The sending of offensive or pornographic e-mail may expose the Council to claims of sexual harassment, which further emphasise the reasons behind the obvious restrictions placed upon this type of material.

Given the Shire of Plantagenet's strong opposition to this matter, it must be understood that any person who is found to store this material in their own private folders, or who forwards this material onto any other person, either within our internal network or by external email, will have their email services terminated immediately and face the disciplinary actions detailed above.

Capturing Email

Staff are reminded to forward all email that needs to be retained as a record (in accordance with the Council's Record Keeping Plan) to the Records Officer for capturing in our record keeping system.

Format of Outgoing Email

When sending email (as with other forms of communication) you are conveying the Council's image. As such, the standard e-mail template must be used by all staff. The template is defined as follows:

- (a) Font – Times New Roman (size 11)
- (b) Signature – to be as follows:
 - Name
 - Title
 - Shire of Plantagenet
 - Telephone – (08) 9892 XXXX
 - Facsimile – (08) 9892 XXXX
 - Email – name@plantagenet.wa.gov.au
 - Web – www.plantagenet.wa.gov.au
- (c) Spelling – each employee's email settings are to have the 'spell check' feature automatically turned on.

Internet Usage

The Internet is a resource, which is to be used for work, related purposes and inappropriate use, including any violation of the conditions and rules, may result in the cancellation of the access. The Chief Executive Officer will determine appropriate use and may deny, revoke, suspend or close any user access at any time.

Encounter of Controversial Material

Whilst the Shire utilises a software programme which prohibits access to particular sites, access by employees to sites on the internet which could be construed as obscene, sexual, racist, discriminatory, or unacceptable for business are not to be intentionally visited. It is the user's responsibility not to initiate access to such material. Deliberate accessing of such sites is expressly banned and renders the employee to formal disciplinary procedures. If such a site is accessed unexpectedly, it is expected that the user will immediately terminate the connection.

The exception to this rule would apply to Information Technology staff ONLY for the monitoring of sites visited by other users. Any decision by the Chief Executive Officer to restrict access to Internet material shall not be deemed to impose any duty on the Shire to regulate the content of the material on the Internet.

Downloading Software

Downloading of software through the Internet is strictly prohibited. The reason for this prohibition is that the Shire can be exposed to action arising from possible copyright infringement issues and the Shire's computing network can be open to disruption from virus attacks.

If a user has identified any software package that is useful for the Shire's operations and can be downloaded through the Internet, they must be referred to the Deputy Chief Executive Officer for evaluation. The software will be evaluated on the following guidelines:

- (a) Compatibility with the Shire's hardware and existing software
- (b) Software licensing arrangements
- (c) Copyright and other intellectual property rights
- (d) Availability of budget funds
- (e) Virus protection
- (f) Ethical and moral issues

No software is to be either downloaded through the Internet or purchased from any other means unless approved (based on the above criteria) by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer.

APPENDIX: ETIQUETTE AND ETHICS FOR THE EFFECTIVE USE OF E-MAIL

Since e-mail is not quite like other methods of communications, a distinct etiquette for its use has evolved. Following are some guidelines that have been adapted from the 'The Business of Electronic Mail', issued by Telstra, Melbourne (1997).

Email Ethics

- (1) Use good judgment by not sending messages that are libellous, defamatory, abusive and obscene or in bad taste. All users of email systems must act with courtesy and refrain from the use of inflammatory or offensive language at all times. Remember that you may be legally liable for any libellous or defamatory statements made.
- (2) Never forget that a person is receiving the email. It is very easy to make critical or intemperate comments across email when the recipient of these comments and the impact it has on them does not confront you.
- (3) Like the information in Council's paper based record, the contents of Council's email system are also part of the public record. It may therefore be subjected to public access and scrutiny under disclosure law such as the Freedom of Information Legislation. Hence email content needs to be objective in nature with all system users endeavouring to avoid the use of subjective comments.

Email Etiquette

- (4) Read and respond to Messages.

Check your email regularly; ignoring a message is discourteous and confusing to the sender. If you receive a message intended for another person, do not just ignore it; return it to the sender. Answer messages in a timely manner, informing senders when their requests cannot be accommodated. Delete messages as soon as they have been answered or the issue resolved. For messages that must be retained, develop an orderly filing system.

- (5) All Capital Letters give the effect of SHOUTING!

Many people interpret the use of all capitals in email to indicate shouting, anger or rudeness. Shouting is most effective if it is reserved for special occasions. In any case, studies show that proper use of upper and lower case assists word recognition and makes a message easier to read. Capitalise words only to HIGHLIGHT an important point or distinguish a title or heading.

- (6) Be courteous.

While conciseness is good, it should never be at the expense of common courtesy; say please and thank you.

- (7) Review before Sending.

Reading a message before sending will not only reveal spelling and grammatical mistakes, but if you put yourself in the place of the recipient you will detect whether your message is sensible and is going to be well received and understood. Human conversation uses gesture and tone to convey the meaning of words. An email message can contain words which were humorously intended by the author but which, without the

accompanying expression or inflection if the words were spoken, seem insulting to the recipient. If you must use sarcasm or express emotion in a message, clearly label it.

(8) Sign-off your Messages.

Include your name and affiliation at the end of a message. Not only is this courteous, but it serves the practical function of reassuring the reader that the message has not been truncated in its travels. This is particularly important if sending through a gateway to a different mail system, where a message can sometimes be truncated on the way to its destination.

(9) Forwarding Earlier Messages.

Be professional and careful what you say about others in email. In the case of your own messages, you should say clearly in the message if you do not want all or part of its contents relayed. In the case of messages you receive from others, think first of any possible damage or embarrassment to the originator before forwarding it. It may be possible to remove sensitive parts of the message before sending it on to others. Do not edit and resend a message that you have received without indicating that changes have been made to the original. Remember that e-mail is not confidential; it is neither absolutely private nor absolutely secure. The recipient of a message has control of the content and can use it how they choose. If you wish to on-forward a previously received e-mail to a third party, you should, as a matter of courtesy, seek permission from the originator that you are relaying their message.

(10) Email Responsibly.

Do not waste resources by sending inconsequential messages and do not accumulate large amounts of email which are no longer required. Try to avoid irrelevancies and try to keep messages succinct and brief. Focus on one subject per message. Always define the topic of a message in the email subject header to make it easy for the recipient to quickly review their list of messages.

(11) Message Distributions.

Keep the list of recipients and carbon copies (cc) to a minimum. It is too easy to widely disseminate messages that are of limited or no interest to most recipients (commonly referred to as junk mail).

(12) Large File Attachments.

Do not send email messages enclosing large file attachments and distribute these widely (eg everyone in mailing lists) as they can cause email servers and gateways to fail. It can also cause traffic problems on the network. A preferred approach is to make the file accessible to other users by placing it in a shared folder or directory and informing users of its availability.

(13) Assume the competence and honesty of the sender.

Giving someone the benefit of the doubt is a good starting point, especially if you do not know them and they're hundreds of kilometres away. There have been examples of replies to messages that appear to assume the sender is incompetent or an idiot when the recipient has misunderstood the context or intent of the message.

(14) Use Receipts.

If a message is important, then you need to be sure that it is received and read. In this case make sure you ask for a delivery receipt and a read-receipt. This will cause a message to be sent to you automatically to tell you when the message has been delivered to the recipient's mail box, and when the recipient has opened your message to read it.

(15) Keep a Copy.

Before removing mail messages from your Sent Mail folder, make sure that any important matters they relate to are closed.

(16) Schedule a reminder.

If you have an electronic diary, or indeed any sort of diary, schedule a reminder to check on the status of an important message after an appropriate period.

(17) Treat email as a permanent, official record.

What you write can be used in evidence. Keep this in mind before you click the send button. Even if you do not think the matter is important enough to keep a copy, your recipient may keep a copy. Assume that any message you send is permanent and could be modified and/or forwarded throughout the world without your knowledge or consent.'

ADOPTED:

LAST REVIEWED 25 September 2007:

Return this completed page to the Senior Administration / Human Resource Officer

SHIRE OF PLANTAGENET E-MAIL POLICY ACCEPTANCE FORM

I _____ having read the Shire of Plantagenet E-mail Policy document and Appendices, agree to abide by the terms and conditions as outlined.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

(This form is to be retained on the employees personnel file)