BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL E-MAIL USE POLICY STATEMENT - July 2005

A. General

- 1. This Policy forms part of the City Council's overall Policy on Electronic Communications and will be kept consistent with that Policy.
- 2. The City Council's e-mail service is provided to support the City Council's activities. Access to the e-mail service is granted to City Council employees and other individuals expressly on this basis.
- 3. Personal use of the City Council's e-mail facilities is permitted only in accordance with the Council's E-mail Use Policy and Code of Practice. This may include restrictions on the time and amount of usage or on the services that are made available. Persistent misuse of e-mail facilities may lead to their being withdrawn.
- 4. E-mail documents are not private property and form part of the administrative records of the City Council. In exceptional circumstances, managers may be given access to the mailbox of an individual member of staff. The circumstances in which this can happen and the controls on requests will be kept fully documented and published.
- 5. The use of City Council e-mail services for private commercial purposes or the unauthorised advertising of goods and services is strictly forbidden.
- 6. E-mail services are provided primarily to support the sending and receipt of simple messages and the transfer of short documents to limited numbers of users. Other services are available for the distribution of larger documents and to larger groups and should normally be used instead of e-mail.
- 7. Attachments should not be created unnecessarily and, wherever possible, all information should be included in the body of the e-mail message rather than as an attached document.
- 8. Large file attachments (greater than 10mb), including large graphics or multi-media files, should not be sent by e-mail. Links to shared storage areas or file transfer services should be used instead.
- 9. Messages that have been dealt with should be deleted regularly, but where they are retained indefinitely, they must conform to the standards for retention periods and destruction schedules.
- 10. The City Council will provide designated archiving facilities for those documents which need to be retained for administrative purposes. It will be a condition of the use of those designated databases that the content will be available for searching by defined information retrieval applications.

11. The content of e-mail documents may be disclosed to individuals or outside agencies, as required by current Data Protection, Freedom of Information or other relevant legislation.

B. Acceptable Use

- 12. The use of e-mail services must conform to all relevant City Council policies, including those on sexual and racial harassment and abuse. The City Council's e-mail services must never be used for abusive purposes.
- 13. The use of obscene, abusive, pornographic or sexually explicit language or images is not acceptable nor is the use of e-mail to transfer similarly offensive material.
- 14. E-mail, even inside the City Council, is a form of publication. Individual employees as well as the Council are potentially liable to action for libel, defamation or breach of trust. E-mail must not be used for potentially libellous or defamatory purposes.
- 15. The City Council's policies on communications with the media or appearing to act as a spokesperson for the City Council apply also to e-mail communications.
- 16. A Code of Practice is provided as an adjunct to this Policy. It includes guidelines on etiquette and courtesy and the use of typography (e.g. the use of capital letters) and emoticons to convey emotional content, as well as advice on the style of address and avoiding rudeness or unnecessary terseness. The Code of Practice will be kept up to date independently of the E-mail Use Policy but will conform to it.

C. Management Arrangements

- 17. The use of e-mail to communicate via the Internet or to external partner organisations will also conform with the relevant standards or policies for those activities.
- 18. The encryption of messages, whether for external or internal use, should be used only for content that meets the Council's data classification criteria for Sensitive or Restricted data. Further information on the data classification system is available in the City Council's Information Security Policy.
- 19. In order to ensure compliance with this policy, the City Council will employ monitoring software to check on the use of e-mail services as well as, where appropriate, software to check the content of e-mail to ensure that there are no serious breaches of the policy. A separate Code of Practice has been developed to ensure that these monitoring facilities are used only for the legitimate purpose of ensuring compliance with the City Council's e-mail policy. All monitoring of e-mail messages will conform with the **Lawful**

Business Practices Regulations and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

- 20. In the case of City Council employees, the provisions of the City Council's Disciplinary Code will apply to any breach of this Policy and the associated Code of Practice. In the case of repeated minor infractions, Service Area management may request the withdrawal of e-mail facilities.
- 21. In case of dispute, employees may lodge an appeal through the Council's standard Appeals procedure.
- 22. All City Council service areas and partner organisations will be required to observe the relevant provisions of the **Data Protection Act 1998** (and any related legislation) and to conform, where appropriate, with the City Council's policies and procedures relating to Data Protection.
- 24. Partner organisations and others wishing to make use of the City Council's e-mail facilities will be required to agree in writing to observe this policy or one agreed by the City Council as equally acceptable. This may take the form of a Code of Connection.
- 25. This policy applies equally to all internal and external suppliers of e-mail related services. Signed agreement to and compliance with this policy will be a condition of any contract or agreement for the supply of these services.