

# Birmingham City Council

## Code of Practice for Using Messaging Services

Version 7.0 - MAY 2012

### Introduction

This Code of Practice for using messaging services has been produced as an integral part of the City Council's Email Use Policy Statement and should be read in conjunction with that statement. The latest versions of both documents are always to be found on the Lotus Notes PSPG database and on Inline.

The Email Use Policy Statement provides the basic principles which the council has adopted for its messaging services.

The purpose of the Code of Practice is to provide more detailed information on the proper and effective use of messaging services within the council. The Code of Practice provides more detail on what is permissible in using the messaging services and how best to use them. To achieve this goal, it is organised into a number of sections which cover the following areas:

- Section 1. Purpose and Scope of the Code of Practice
- Section 2. Roles and Responsibilities
- Section 3. Specific Protocols
- Section 4. Monitoring Usage of messaging
- Section 5. Detailed Rules for using messaging
- Section 6. Secure messaging services
- Section 7. Instant Messaging
- Section 8. Social Media based messaging
- Section 9. Personal Use of messaging
- Section 10. Service Area use of messaging
- Section 11. Unified Communications and calendaring
- Section 12. Archiving
- Section 13. Messages to groups and global messages
- Section 14. Good Practice Guide
- Section 15. Enforcement

**It is essential that all staff read carefully the Email Use Policy Statement Policy and Code of Practice for using messaging services.**

**The Code of Practice needs to be kept up to date to be effective and, so, is revised frequently. Before relying on a printed copy, staff are advised to check that this is the latest version. The latest approved version will always be on Inline, in the section dealing with IT Policies and Standards or on the PSPG database in Lotus Notes.**

**If anyone requires further guidance, they should contact their line manager or service area security contact, as it is the responsibility of each individual employee to ensure that he/she has read, understood and acts in accordance with the Policy. General queries about the Email Use Policy Statement and the Code of Practice can be addressed to the Information and Strategy Team in the Performance and Information Division of the Corporate Resources Directorate. The Team's email address is Information and Strategy Team.**

## **Section 1. Purpose and scope of the Code of Practice**

1.1 This document contains:

the rules covering the use of the council's messaging services, including email

a detailed explanation of how Birmingham City Council's messaging services should be used for maximum benefit and efficiency

details of procedures for important processes, including links to forms that may be needed to request various services.

1.2 The purpose of the Code of Practice is to protect both individual users and the council in order to ensure that use of the messaging services is appropriate and effective and to protect the council's information and systems from misuse.

1.3 It applies to all users of Birmingham City Council messaging services, whether or not they are council employees. It is a condition of being permitted to use the council's messaging services that non-council users agree to observe the council's policies.

1.4 It applies to all channels or forms in which the council's messaging services are provided, whether on the corporate network, across secure mobile links or on mobile 'phones or other handheld mobile devices.

1.5 In this Code of Practice, "messages" and "messaging" are to be understood to mean electronic messages.

## **Section 2. Roles and responsibilities**

### **2.1 Users of the Messaging service are required to:**

- Observe the Birmingham City Council Email Use Policy Statement and all existing Council policies that apply to the use of messaging, including (but not exclusively) those that deal with privacy, misuse of council resources, harassment at work, information and data security, and confidentiality. Details of all current council policies and standards are available on the Workzone section of Inline and on the PSPG database in Lotus Notes
- Observe this Messaging Code of Practice.

### **2.2 As the service area responsible for overseeing the provision of the messaging services, the Information and Strategy Team in the Performance and Information Division of Corporate Resources Directorate will ensure that Service Birmingham will:**

- Provide a reliable corporate infrastructure to support the messaging services
- Agree service levels and charges with the Performance and Information Division in Birmingham City Council
- Provide monitoring information including directly to service areas and Birmingham Audit in accordance with Section 3 of this Code of Practice.

### **2.3 Council Service Area Management must:**

- Decide who is permitted to use the messaging services for their area and with what restrictions, consistent with the Email Use Policy Statement
- Ensure that staff given access to the messaging services receive a copy of the Email Use Policy Statement and Code of Practice
- Manage their staff's use of the messaging service
- Deal with breaches of the Policy which occur within their service area, seeking advice from the Information and Strategy Team as appropriate and taking the required action.

### **2.4 Birmingham Audit will:**

- Alert service areas and the Information and Strategy Team of any concerns regarding messaging use which are discovered as part of the auditing activity
- Investigate all breaches or alleged breaches of security which have been reported to it.
- Provide advice and guidance to Directorates on security controls.

### **2.5 Legal Services will:**

- Provide legal advice and assistance to service areas and the Information and Strategy Team in relation to messaging use and the monitoring of messaging.

Copies of the Information Security General Standard and Email Use Policy Statement are available from the Directorate Information Security representatives as well as on Inline Workzone and in the PSPG database on Lotus Notes.

### **Section 3. Specific protocols**

3.1 This section of the Code of Practice documents any specific protocols or similar procedures which provide guidance on the use of messaging services in particular circumstances.

#### **3.2 A. Protocol for sending to and receiving messages from Elected Members**

##### 3.2.1. General considerations

The council has approved an overall policy for the use of messaging by Members and Officers of the council, which applies equally to all other people who have been given access to the council messaging facilities in order to carry out work for or on behalf of the council.

There are, however, specific requirements which govern the use of messaging communications between Members and Officers. The fundamental requirement for Members is that they should be provided with sufficient and timely information to allow them to discharge their functions while not being deluged with unnecessary communications, which take time to read and which may be of little relevance to them.

##### 3.2.2. Rules for sending messages to Members

Officers should not normally send messages to Members unless:

It is in direct response to a question from a Member and that Officer is the appropriate person to provide the answer. Any Officer who is in doubt about whether he or she should reply directly to a question from a Member should check with his/her line manager

The content of the message is directly related to a previously expressed area of interest on which the Elected Member has asked to be kept informed. Further guidance on how Members should be kept informed should be available for each service directorate

An electronic message is the most appropriate way of communicating with the Member. Other methods – such a written message or a telephone message - should be considered before deciding to send an electronic message.

## **Section 4. Monitoring usage of messaging**

4.1 Monitoring usage of messaging is an essential part of protecting the council's business interests and the integrity of its services. It is also an important element of planning future requirements for messaging and other forms of communication.

4.2 For the purpose of ensuring compliance with Birmingham City Council's policies and procedures, all messaging will be monitored.

4.3 The use of Birmingham City Council messaging service will be monitored for traffic capacity and billing purposes at network level.

4.4 The monitoring and interception of electronic communications is permitted if carried out in accordance with the Lawful Business Practices Regulations issued under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA). The council's monitoring of the messaging services will follow these guidelines. Current copies of all the relevant RIPA and other investigatory procedures are available on the Lotus Notes PSPG database and on InLine.

4.5 In certain cases, it will be necessary to look at the content of messages. The situations in which this is permitted are as follows:

### 4.5.1. Monitoring or recording communications –

To establish the existence of facts, to ascertain compliance with regulatory or self-regulatory practices or procedures

In the interest of national security (in which case only certain specified public officials may make the interception)

To prevent or detect crime

To investigate or detect unauthorised use of telecommunications systems or,

To secure, or as an inherent part of, effective system operation

To ascertain or demonstrate the standards which are achieved, or ought to be achieved by persons using the system in the course of their duties

### 4.5.2. Monitoring received communications to determine whether they are business or personal communications.

### 4.5.3. Monitoring communications made to counselling/ anonymous telephone helplines.

4.6 Detailed analysis of an individual's use of the messaging services will be carried out only in response to a formal request from a service area which has been authorised by the appropriate Assistant Director or Head of Service or by Birmingham Audit in connection with a specific investigation.

## **Section 5. Detailed rules for the use of the messaging services**

5.1 All messaging usage must be conducted honestly, and in accordance with relevant council policies, especially those covering privacy, misuse of resources, sexual or other harassment, security and confidentiality.

5.2 The council's messaging services must never be used for abusive purposes. The use of obscene, abusive, pornographic or sexually explicit language or images is not acceptable; nor is the use of messaging to transfer similarly offensive material.

5.3 All users of the council's messaging services must conform to the council's policies and procedures relating to Data Protection. Current copies of all relevant documents are available on the Lotus Notes PSPG database and on Inline.

5.4 Messaging is provided for council business purposes, so the style structure, content of messages and the time taken to respond to e-mail messages in particular should conform to conventional correspondence practices. Particularly when replying to messages or requests from citizens, customers or supplier organisations, undue informality should be avoided.

5.5. Only relevant and accurate information about individuals should be included in messages or attachments. Individuals have a right under the Data Protection Act to request copies of information about them held by the council.

5.6. Users must not send any information that is defamatory: e.g. malicious or untrue references to a person or group of people.

5.7 All access to messaging services is protected by an adequate and appropriate form of identity management, which includes the user of user ids and passwords. The creation, maintenance and use of these identity measures will conform to the relevant council policies and standards.

5.8 Users must not share their user id with anyone. Any such violations will be recorded as security incidents and investigated accordingly. This may include revoking the messaging account while the investigation is being carried out.

5.9 Users must ensure that passwords are kept private and never shared with others. Any such violations will be recorded as security incidents and investigated accordingly. This may include revoking the messaging account while the investigation is being carried out.

5.10 Users must ensure passwords are changed regularly. The standard for passwords is available on the Lotus Notes PSPG database and on Inline.

5.11 File attachments greater than 10mb, (typically large graphics or multi-media files) should not be sent by general email. Users should use the File and Document Sharing database to upload large files into a temporary storage area and provide a link to the intended recipients. This is to ensure that proper capacity planning can take place on the network. In the event of a problem using this service, users should ring the Service Birmingham Service Desk on 464 4444.

5.12 Users must not participate in electronic chain letters. Chain email letters are any kind of communication that requests you to pass them on to other unidentified individuals, whether within the council or not. Anyone receiving such a message should delete it and must not pass it on. This definition applies to any such message whether or not the content appears to relate to an employee's job – e.g. if it purports to warn people about fraud, scams or computer security. If an excessive number of chain letters are received, these should be reported to the directorate security representative.

5.13. Users must not use the messaging services for private commercial purposes or for the unauthorised advertising of goods and services.

5.14 Users must not circulate software or other material that may be covered by the copyright of other organisations or people. Users must never send free software by email. Users must never send links to Internet sites from which unauthorised software can be downloaded.

5.15 To avoid receiving junk mail, users must join a mailing list for legitimate business reasons only. If in doubt, staff should check with their manager or with the Information and Strategy Team.

5.16 Users must check their mailbox regularly and at least once a day when in the office.

5.17 When out of the office for extended periods, users must set up an out of office message, indicating when they are expected to return and, if appropriate, giving an alternative contact name and telephone number within their team.

5.18 Users must be aware that when they are out of the office for an unexpected period of time, there may be occasion for their manager to access their mailbox. Where this is a regular occurrence and delivery of the service is likely to suffer an adverse impact, users should set up their manager or other appropriate person with delegated Read access to their mail file. Instructions for doing this are in the File-Preferences-Calendar and To Do dialogue on the Notes mailbox view.

5.19 Where the delegation hasn't been made and there is a legitimate work reason to access the mail file, the manager can request this access using the Emergency Access procedure, which includes privacy safeguards. This procedure can be found on the Lotus Notes PSPG database and on Inline.

5.20 Care should be taken when sending information of a confidential nature. More detailed information on handling data is contained in the Information Security Labelling and Handling Standard and Code of Practice, which are available on the Lotus Notes PSPG database and on Inline. Updated guidance on the transfer of sensitive data can be found on the Information and Data Policies FAQs database on Lotus Notes.

5.21 Users should carry out regular housekeeping to ensure that messages are not retained for longer than is necessary. If in doubt, seek guidance from the Service Birmingham Service Desk on archiving, electronic filing, retention and destruction schedules.

5.22 Users should not open messages or attachments from sources they do not trust as these can contain viruses and other destructive elements. If in doubt, the message should be deleted.

5.23 Users should avoid using the "Reply to All" option when replying to an email message and they should never use "Reply to All" in response to a global message or a message sent to a distribution list. This only causes problems for the delivery system and annoyance to other users. Persistent misuse of the "Reply to All" facility may lead to the suspension of the email account.

5.24 Users should only use the "Blind Courtesy Copy" (bcc) facility where there is a demonstrable need to shield the names of all recipients from each other. It should not be used purely to disguise the fact that the message is being sent to people other than the ones in the open destinations.

5.25 Users must remember that when data is sent over the Internet it is normally sent in clear text and not protected and so should not be used for sending sensitive information. Where secure messaging services are available, these should be used for sending confidential or sensitive information. Further details are in Section 6 of this Code of Practice.

5.26 Users must not set any features that would allow the automatic forwarding of messages to other accounts.

5.27 For certain work-related transactions or processes, secure messaging services may be required. Further details are in Section 6 of this Code of Practice.

5.28 Users should set the Signature section of their Preferences in the e-mail system to contain basic information consisting of their name, job title, section (if relevant) and directorate, as well as a telephone number, if they have one. A fax number is optional. The Signature should be in text format, not HTML and on no account should a graphic file be attached to provide any form of Signature.

5.29 When using the Out of Office message, the option **not** to reply automatically to mail from Internet addresses should always be chosen if there is any possibility that a response might indicate that any service is not being monitored or an office is likely to be empty. Any user who could reasonably be expected to receive a Freedom of Information request directly to their email address should include an alternative contact for FOI requests.

## **Section 6 Secure messaging services**

- 6.1 The council may provide secure messaging services which supplement or replace the standard messages services, including email. These services may include services provided by external service providers, such as the Government Connect Secure Email Service. These requirements extend to any mobile devices which may be used to access or deliver secure messaging services.
- 6.2 Access to the secure email service will only be provided to those staff who need the service for a recognised work purpose and who meet the security requirements for access. These include: having undergone a basic identity check; having provided details of previous employment; having provided details of any unspent convictions; providing proof of having received basic training in key information security measures.
- 6.3 All messages sent via the GC Secure Email service must contain in the subject line the appropriate information classification category. The defined categories and their application to data are documented in the Information Security Classification Standard and the Information Security Labelling and Handling Standard and Code of Practice. These documents are all available on Inline and in the PSPG database on Lotus Notes.
- 6.4 Applications for a GC Secure Mailbox must be made to the PI Governance mailbox using the application form, which is available on Inline and in the PSPG database on Lotus Notes.
- 6.5 All the other relevant requirements in this Code of Practice apply to the use of secure messaging facilities and any serious or repeated breach of them may lead to the withdrawal of the facility.

## **Section 7 Social media based messaging**

- 7.1 The council is making increasing use of messaging services which form part of a wider use of social media for communication and collaboration. These include “micro-blogging” sites such as Twitter and Yammer.
- 7.2 The principles of the overall policy on messaging apply equally to social media based messaging: messages and contributions which clearly identify the person as a council employee need to be consistent with the council’s policy on public comments about the council and its activities.
- 7.3 Staff should avoid work-related discussion of the internal management of the council in public forums (such as Twitter). For these kinds of discussion, they should use closed services (such as Yammer).
- 7.4 The distinctions between work-related and personal use of messaging apply equally to the use of social media based messaging.
- 7.5 The use of social media messaging services should follow the advice in the “Social Media – Guidelines for Officers” Standard available on Inline and on the PSPG database on Lotus Notes.

## **Section 8 Instant Messaging services**

8.1 The relevant requirements of this Code of Practice apply to the use of Instant Messaging (IM) services.

8.2 All IM conversations are recorded and will be retained for a minimum of 6 months.

8.3 Where covered by a valid Data Protection Subject Access or Freedom of Information request, the content of an IM conversation may be disclosed.

## **Section 9 Personal Use of messaging services**

9.1 Birmingham City Council's messaging services are provided for use by Members and Officers in delivering the council's services and discharging its statutory functions.

9.2 Personal use of the council's messaging services will be allowed subject to the following restrictions:

9.2.1 Personal use must be carried out in accordance with Section 2 – Roles and Responsibilities of this Code of Practice.

9.2.2 Personal use should be kept to a minimum – i.e. as little as possible.

9.2.3 Personal use must be restricted to short messages, which is to be understood as no more than 500 words.

9.2.4 Personal messages should not be sent to groups of users.

9.2.5 Personal messages must not contain attachments over 2mb or any of the prohibited file types. The e-mail filters are set to block these file types.

9.2.6 Personal e-mail messages should contain the text 'personal e-mail' within the subject heading of the message.

9.2.7 The use of messaging for personal purposes must not interfere with service delivery activities.

9.3 When sending data of a sensitive nature (e.g. health details) within a personal message, Birmingham City Council messaging users should be aware that the messaging system is monitored.

9.4 If a personal message which contains inappropriate or offensive material is received by the corporate messaging servers, it will be quarantined and a message sent to the intended recipient. If the intended recipient requests its release, this will only be permitted after consideration of the analysis and the classification level of the language contained in the message. If an inappropriate message is received, a reply should be sent at the earliest opportunity informing the sender to refrain from sending similar messages. The message must then be deleted.

9.5 Messaging use in connection with a Birmingham City Council sponsored course is considered to be business and not personal use and attachments would be allowed.

## **Section 10 Service Area use of messaging**

- 10.1 All use of the council's messaging services must conform to the basic principles of the Email Use Policy Statement. The use of messaging services by service areas must not contravene these principles.
- 10.2 Service areas must not develop business applications of which messaging is a critical component without prior agreement from Service Birmingham and the Performance and Information Division.
- 10.3 The ability to use the council's messaging service for the internal promotion of commercial services is limited to the ability to send global marketing messages, which are defined in Section 9.

## **Section 11 Unified Communications and Calendars**

11.1 Unified communications is defined as a composite set of communication and messaging features which include e-mail, instant messaging, IP telephony, calendaring and presence (which is the recording of someone's current physical availability and which communications services they are logged on to).

11.2 Where Unified Communications have been implemented, users should ensure that their Calendar entries are kept up to date.

11.3 Calendars should be kept open to allow other user to discover availability. Personal or sensitive entries should be marked Private and the Subject line of the Calendar entry should contain text that doesn't disclose any personal or sensitive information.

11.4 Where presence and/or instant messaging have been implemented, users should set their status to indicate their availability to be contacted.

## **Section 12 Archiving**

12.1 The council provides a centralised archiving service for Lotus Notes email messages. The primary purposes of the archiving service are to provide long-term storage for messaging communications of significance to the council and to improve the operation of the live messaging services by reducing mailbox files sizes.

12.2 The service is automatic and individual users have no direct control over its operation.

12.3 Email messages over seven days old will be copied to the archiving system but will not be removed from the user's live mailbox

12.4 Email messages more than six months old will be replaced with a link in the user's live mailbox to the copy of the message in the archiving system. The user's view of messages in the mailbox will not change as a result of archiving. Deleting a message that has been archived from the user's mailbox will not delete the message in the archive system.

12.5 After the defined period for retaining email messages (currently seven years), all messages will be deleted from the archive.

12.6 A separate corporate archive will be provided for any documents that may need to be kept for longer than the defined period or kept for records management purposes. This archive will be organised by content and not by user. User access controls will be used to ensure that only properly authorised people can access these documents.

12.7 In the case of instant messaging conversations, all conversations are recorded and will be kept for a minimum period of six months. These are not kept in the email archive but are equally protected from unauthorised access.

12.8 The archived mailboxes and archived instant messaging conversations will be made available for searching to meet the council's obligations under the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act. Access to the data to meet legitimate DP and FOI requests will be limited to individuals authorised to respond to requests and access will be limited to the relevant mailboxes and granted only following a formal request from an authorised person for each specific search. A log will be kept of all access under DPA and FOI requirements.

12.9 Similar arrangements will apply to searches by Auditors or other investigators using statutory powers to investigate potential offences.

## **Section 13 Global messages and messages to groups**

13.1 The ability to send messages to all users defined in the Notes Name and Address Book (“Global messages”) is restricted to Notes Administrators and needs to be requested formally.

13.2 Global messages can be sent only for messages that relate to the work of the council or for some urgent matter that needs to be drawn to the attention to most or all employees, such as civil emergencies, major traffic or environmental problems.

13.3 There are two categories of global message and different arrangements will apply to both requesting them and sending them. Requests for a global message to be sent will be categorised into one of these two types or rejected as not meeting the criteria for a global message.

13.4 Messages sent by the “lotus notes” email address contain important information that users need to be made aware of, including information about the ICT systems, employment matters or key aspects of the work of the council. All users are expected to read these messages and they must not be deleted without being read, including by making use of the Rules facility available in some versions of the Notes desktop (Client) software.

13.5 My Weekly News contains business information and promotional information about council services that are available to council employees. The business information should be read, but it is up to the user whether they read the marketing information circulated in the bulletin.

13.6 Group lists have been provided for administrative use by Directorates, departments and sections. They should be used only for work-related purposes. They should not be used to promote any commercial activities or for seeking financial or support for any activity that is not endorsed specifically by the council, including charitable or voluntary activities. The use of group lists may be restricted to authorised users only, such a building managers.

13.7 Detailed guidance on the procedure to be followed in requesting an addition to the My Weekly News bulletin can be found on the My Weekly News page on InLine.

13.8 Global messages to schools cannot be sent on the Lotus Notes system. Messages which need to be sent to schools should be sent to the CYPF Communications email address.

## Section 14. Good Practice Guide

### 14.1 A quick guide to Email Better Practice

#### Contents

- Introduction
- Email overload
- Email Etiquette
- Emailing – Care and Attention

#### 14.2 Introduction

Email is now a dominant method of communicating our messages in business. It is quick, inexpensive, flexible and convenient.

The way email works is different from any other medium of communication you use.

The differences between an email and a letter or a fax can appear to be subtle. But the effect these differences can have on the clarity of your message can be huge.

Business relationships need attention and awareness to make them work. Care is needed when they are nurtured using a medium such as email.

We all communicate differently. And to use email effectively means developing your own email focused style of writing and designing messages.

As you read this guide you will begin to become aware of how to create messages that clearly represent you and your intentions. You will learn how the fundamentals of best practice that will make our email system much more effective.

#### 14.3 Email Overload

- **The number of emails you receive**
- **The number of attachments you send and receive**
- **What to do with your email messages**

##### 14.3.1 The Number of Emails You Receive

If the reason you send a message is unclear you are likely to elicit an unclear reply. Or replies you do not want.

So be clear and concise with your outgoing messages. This should help to reduce the volume of your incoming messages. Be careful with CCs and BCCs in particular.

When sending emails to groups make sure the message is appropriate for the recipients.

***“Do you really need to tell everyone at Lancaster Circus that someone has left their lights on at Woodcock Street?”***

People feel that it is an infringement of their time to have to read superfluous messages.

If you need to send a message to a mailing list make sure you understand who belongs to that list.

### **14.3.2 The Number of Attachments You Send and Receive**

Be frugal with your bytes. Many people pick up their emails over slower links on the network which means larger attachments take time to download. They also take up hard disk space and can have an adverse effect on network traffic. In some severe cases large attachments can disrupt the system and cause servers to crash.

It is better to use links (Doclinks /Lotus Notes databases such as notice boards) URLs (weblinks) rather than attachments. You can update shared files far more efficiently with links when working on collaborative projects.

### **14.3.4 What to do with Your Emails**

Get into a habit of reading your email ONCE only, then Action, File or Delete the email immediately.

Be organised and disciplined with your filing.

Make sure your inbox remains as clear as possible. This will ensure messages that need your attention will remain visible

REMEMBER BEFORE WRITING AN EMAIL THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION TO ASK YOURSELF IS WHETHER IT IS THE BEST MEDIUM FOR YOUR MESSAGE

## **14.4 Email Etiquette**

- **Creating context and subject lines**
- **Email and anger**
- **Using Emoticons**

### **14.4.1 Creating context and Subject Lines**

A good way to begin is with a clear and informative subject line that gets straight to the point and sets your recipient up to read your message.

The subject line is the first part of your message the recipient will see: Rules to apply are:

- Do not leave a subject line empty
- Keep subject lines short as most inboxes only display 25 – 35 characters
- If you require an action, make it clear in the subject line
- For messages which are purely for recipients' information only, use FYI as a prefix
- only use the word urgent if the message really is urgent
- Using # at the beginning of your subject line means that all your message is contained in the title (recipients do not need to open your emails).

### **14.4.2 Email and Anger**

With email you only have the use of the written word. You are unable to use your rich and natural communication tools, body language and vocal expression.

If an email upsets you, take some time to settle down. Reread and rethink instead of sending an angry reply.

An email may appear to you to have been written in anger when it has simply been written quickly and informally.

Angry emails are called FLAMES and are notorious for provoking further angry emails. This type of exchange is called a FLAME WAR and should always be avoided.

**IF YOU WRITE IN CAPITALS IT WILL BE ASSUMED YOUR ARE SHOUTING.**

#### **14.4.3 Using Emoticons**

Mood and emotions do not carry clearly with emails. Symbols such as smileys :-)) can be used to convey mood. However, these can be easily misunderstood so should be used with care. A list of Mood Stamps can be found in 'Delivery Options' when creating a 'New Memo'

### 14.5 Emailing - Care and Attention

- **Helping Your recipient read**
- **Assessing Your email**

#### **14.5.1 Helping your recipient read**

As you write email messages check the assumptions you have made about your recipient?

- Are there any cultural or gender differences you need to be aware of?
- Have you included all of the background information they will need?
- Will they be clear about the action you require from the message?

Have your recipient fully understand your intent on the first reading by:

- Using short paragraphs
- Writing short messages where possible
- Making information easy to digest with lists or bullet points
- Writing sentences, paragraphs, lists and bullets in a logical order
- Formatting your message to create a logical and aesthetically pleasing impact.
- It is common courtesy to always begin your e-mail with a salutation and the person's name

An email is no different from a letter sent on Birmingham City Council headed paper. When writing an email ask yourself whether you would be happy to send your message on a company letterhead.

Make sure you are aware of the current Birmingham City Council Email Use Policy which is available on InLine and on the PSPG database on Lotus Notes.

### **14.5.2 Assessing your email**

To help you assess your e-mails here is a four point plan called **PASS**

**P** is for PROFILE

Remember you are profiling yourself and your organisation with every email you send.

**A** is for ASSUMPTIONS

Check out the assumptions you have made about your recipient. Often we assume things that are simply not correct. Remember your recipients will also make assumptions about you when they read your messages.

**S** is for SIMULATE

Before sending an email, simulate your recipient, imagine you are your reader and read through your message. Ask yourself whether they will understand your message quickly and easily in one reading.

**S** is for SELECTION

Have you selected the best medium for your message? Are you using email simply because it is convenient? A telephone call may be better for getting your message through clearly.

**REMEMBER: WHEN YOU SEND AN EMAIL YOU ARE PROFILING YOURSELF TO OTHERS. THE EASIER YOUR EMAILS ARE TO READ THE BETTER YOU AND YOUR ORGANISATION WILL LOOK.**

## **Section 15 Compliance**

15.1 Failure to comply with Birmingham City Council policies and procedures may lead to formal action being taken against individual members of staff.

15.2 Failure to comply may also lead to disciplinary action being taken against you and, in cases of gross misconduct, dismissal.

15.3 Failure to comply may, in certain circumstances, result in removal of the messaging facility.

15.4 In the case of council employees, the provisions of the council's disciplinary code will apply to any breach of this Code of Practice. In the case of repeated minor infractions Service Area management may request withdrawal of messaging facilities.

15.5 In cases of dispute, employees may lodge an appeal through the council's standard Appeals procedure.