

REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 14 FEBRUARY 2005

REPORT ON: ACCEPTABLE USE OF COMPUTERS POLICY

REPORT BY: HEAD OF COMMUNITIES

REPORT NUMBER: 112-2005

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Committee's approval for an amendment to the Acceptable Use of Computers Policy which was previously approved by Committee in March 2003. (Report No 210-2003).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee approve the following:

- 2.1 the introduction of a statement in the policy regarding the management by library staff of the public's use of the Internet through an electronic system which monitors access to Internet sites. (Appendix 1).
- 2.2 reduce the number of levels of Internet access from 4 to 3 levels.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications attached to the amendments to the Acceptable Use of Computers Policy.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Managing access and promoting good practice on the Internet will ensure that the citizens of Dundee have the opportunity to obtain the knowledge, skills and information required to play a full and relevant part in society.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The introduction of an electronic system to manage access to the Internet will ensure that all members of the community have appropriate access to the Internet for their needs.

6.0 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 Following the introduction of the Acceptable Use of Computers Policy in March 2003, there have been rapid developments in the availability of information on the Internet. Access to the Internet is open to misuse and abuse and accordingly the Policy needs amending in order to ensure that the information on good practice and guidelines when accessing the Internet are relevant and current.
- 6.2 An electronic system has been developed by IT Department which monitors public access to the Internet. This allows library staff to remotely access and terminate an Internet connection if a user is contravening the Council's regulations regarding access to the Internet. This will also allow Dundee City Council staff to check that a user is not committing a criminal offence relating to the use of the internet.
- 6.3 Guidelines are in place for library staff to ensure appropriate use of the remote access facility.

- 6.4 There are currently 4 levels of filtered access to the Internet to screen out offensive and potentially illegal Internet material. The highest level of access, which the user has to request from the library staff, has less stringent filtering applied and as a result some offensive material may be allowed through the Council's firewall.

Users have not requested this level of filtering as other filtered access levels have proved to be satisfactory in meeting their needs. As a consequence, access to this level is withdrawn.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and Head of Information Technology have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None

Signed: Stewart Murdoch
Head of Communities

Date: 7 February 2005

Communities Department

Acceptable Use of Computers

1. Introduction

In response to advances in technology, and the changing needs of the community, Dundee City Council's Communities Department is delighted to provide free access to the Internet and other information technology and in so doing supports the educational, recreational and cultural needs of all members of the community.

The Internet:

The Internet enables access to valuable information resources in many different formats. Dundee City Council shall provide access to information to members of the public. Such access may, however, be open to misuse and abuse. This document has been produced in order to safeguard the interests of Dundee City Council and the communities it serves.

2. The Internet and Your Responsibility

Whilst the Internet contains a wealth of valuable and interesting information, some of this information may be inaccurate, out of date, controversial, offensive or illegal.

Dundee City Council cannot be held responsible for the quality, accuracy or availability of information accessed through the Internet, although we will try to signpost sites that appear to be authoritative. As an internet user, therefore, it is your personal responsibility to assess the accuracy of information you access.

Dundee City Council accepts no liability for any loss, damage or injury, direct or indirect, suffered as a result of using these computer resources or relying on the information obtained from such use.

3. Security

Filtering:

Filtering software will be used in an attempt to screen out offensive and potentially illegal Internet material. Ultimately, parents or guardians must assume responsibility for deciding what library resources are appropriate for their children.

There are 3 levels of Internet access:

- **Children aged 8 years and under**

We have identified a pre-determined number of sites which we deem suitable for children aged 8 and under to access. These sites are monitored on a regular basis.

- **Users aged between 8 and 16 years**

This level allows access to sites using pre-defined categories set by the software provider that Dundee City Council assumes will be suitable for children aged 8-16 years.

Any sites that are found to be inappropriate by Dundee City Council shall no longer be made accessible to users.

Whilst every effort is made to continually monitor this level of access, the Council has no control over the content of these classifications.

- **Users aged 16 years and over**

This level allows access to sites using pre-defined categories set by the software provider that Dundee City Council assumes will be suitable for users aged 16 years and over.

Any sites that are found to be inappropriate by Dundee City Council shall no longer be made accessible to users.

Whilst every effort is made to continually monitor this level of access, the Council has no control over the content of these classifications.

Virus-checking software will run on all computers.

Internet users may not load their own software or connect their own computer equipment to library computer equipment. Exceptions are possible for special equipment to help with general computer use (e.g. adaptive hardware for users with Special Needs).

Downloading:

Information from the Internet may be downloaded (within copyright restrictions) to floppy disk or compact disk.

4. Conditions of Access

Membership:

Access to computers in Dundee City Council's Communities Department is available to anyone providing they have not been banned from pc access due to abuse of the Internet.

All users will be asked to complete an on screen Declaration Form stating that they have read this document and agree to abide by its terms and conditions.

Children and Young People:

Children aged under 8 will be allowed Internet access only if under direct supervision of a parent or legal guardian.

Children and young people up to 16 will be allowed Internet access provided that a parent or legal guardian has signed a consent form on their behalf. Eligibility for Internet access will be recorded on their membership card.

Charges for Printing and Consumables:

The use of computers in Dundee City Council's Communities Department is free of charge. However, other charges are applied for printing and purchase of disks as follows:

Black & White Prints:	5 sheets free and thereafter 10p per sheet
Colour Prints:	No free sheets. 10p per sheet
Compact Disks	50p per disk
Floppy Disks:	50p per disk

The use of personal paper for printing is not allowed.

Booking a computer session:

Sessions may be booked in advance, up to seven days ahead, by telephone, on-line by e-mail or other means, or in person.

Sessions can be booked in half-hourly slots with a maximum of two hours. If the demand for computers is not high at the time, a session may be extended.

Subject to availability, some computers may be available for un-booked use.

Only two people may use a computer at any one time. However, under certain circumstances and at the discretion of staff, this quota may be increased.

5. Your Session in Progress

Staff will try wherever possible to help internet users in the proper use of the computers. However, as demand for computer access rises, staff may not always be able to give dedicated assistance. Information on the availability of training is available at all times.

Dundee City Council can monitor access to Internet sites through both manual and electronic systems. This will also allow Dundee City Council staff to check that a user is not committing a criminal offence relating to the use of the internet. Records of Internet access are retained for up to 12 months. Any public access of illegal material shall be the subject of further action. Offensive or controversial material may also be the subject of further action. If in any doubt about the nature of the material being accessed, guidance should be sought from a member of staff.

6. Prohibited Uses

Dundee City Council does not prohibit specific on-line activities as long as they are not considered to be illegal, offensive, obscene, abusive or troublesome to other computer users. However, internet users should be aware that risks are attached to some on-line activities:

- Broadcasting personal or private details over the network may lead to the receiving of unwanted mail or unwanted attention.

- On-line financial transactions are an increasingly common use of the Internet and are often conducted safely over secure connections. However, Dundee City Council cannot be held responsible for any losses resulting from sending confidential financial information via the Internet.
- Some on-line activities can seriously impact on the ability of the network to deliver other services. Dundee City Council reserves the right to restrict access to such services.

Internet users must not interfere with equipment or amend or delete existing software.

7. Penalties for Misuse

Internet users should not access, download, transmit or print any obscene, offensive or illegal material. Staff reserve the right to terminate any Internet connection, which, in their opinion, does not meet this requirement.

Internet users should not violate copyright laws by unauthorised reproduction or distribution of copyright or licensed materials.

Any contravention of these regulations may result in access to Internet facilities being withdrawn. Where it is suspected that a criminal act or acts have taken place Dundee City Council shall immediately refer an internet user to the police and shall provide details to the police of all information accessed.

In the case of contravention by an internet user aged under 16, the parent or guardian who signed the consent form will be notified.

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains timely, relevant and in line with national policies and campaigns.