

SECURITY POLICY

Clear Desk Policy

Introduction and Policy Aims

The council's Smarter Working strategy introduces more open plan offices and hot desking. These clear desk rules reduce the risk of a security breach caused by portable equipment being stolen from council offices, or from personal or sensitive information being stolen or read by unauthorised person(s).

Policy Statement

Staff and others working on council business are expected to clear and remove all documents and portable electronic equipment when they vacate a desk. Documents containing personal or sensitive information must be stored securely and not left on desks for others to read.

The council will provide suitable lockable storage and filing cabinets for the storage of personal or sensitive documents and portable electronic devices.

Not covered by this Policy

The storage and security of electronic information.
This is covered by the Storage of Information security policy.

Policy Benefits

The benefits of this policy include:

- A clean, well-organised and pleasant office environment.
- Improved protection of documents and portable electronic equipment.
- Improved productivity because staff will handle their documents and manage information more efficiently.
- Encouraging a reduction in the amount of paper used.
- Improved security of personal or sensitive documents.

Those Affected

This policy applies to Councillors, employees of the council, contractors, agency workers, and others working in a similar capacity. It applies to volunteers and partner organisations or individuals who work in council offices at any time.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Council staff and others conducting business on behalf of the council – must comply with the policy and keep a clear desk.
2. Council Heads of Service, Service Leads and Managers – must ensure that their staff, and others conducting council business for them, understand and comply with this policy.
3. Front of House Facilities – are responsible for providing keys used to lock away documents or portable electronic devices.

Policy Compliance

If you are found to have breached this policy by not complying with its rules and responsibilities you may be subject to the council's disciplinary procedure or other action. If you are suspected of breaking the Law, you may be subject to prosecution.

If you do not understand the policy or how it applies to you, seek advice from your council manager or from the Information Governance Team.

Applying this Policy – clear desk rules

These clear desk rules must be followed:

1. When you are at a desk

After you have planned your work gather the documents and equipment needed and take them to a desk. Only take the items you need to use during the time you occupy the desk.

2. When you leave a desk for a short time

There is no reason to completely clear the desk except for the following:

- Either log off or lock your computer screen by pressing the control-alt-and delete buttons simultaneously then press space or enter to lock your screen. This will ensure you protect your emails and information.
- Check that no personal or sensitive documents are visible to colleagues. If they are visible, put them out of sight or lock them away.
- Highly sensitive documents must be locked away when not in use. This includes when away you are away from a desk temporarily, e.g. lunch breaks, refreshment breaks or meetings.

3. When you vacate a desk

Remove all documents and other portable equipment from the desk. Leave it clear so that someone else may use it. Always lock away computer devices, DVDs, USB sticks or other portable equipment. Remember to log out of your computer.

The desk must be left clean and completely clear. All office papers and documents should either be put away, or locked away at the end of the working day, if they contain personal or sensitive information.

Anybody allocated a fixed desk for special reasons must also comply with this policy.

Applying this Policy – general guidance

- Reduce the amount of papers on the desk by keeping printing to a minimum – think before you print. Do not print emails just to read them.
- Use a folder for your loose papers. The folder can be stored in your locker, pedestal or team cupboard at the end of each working day.
- Never leave passwords or other security codes visible on a desk or attached to a computer screen. This is a serious breach of security.
- Regularly check the documents and other things you use, if you no longer need them dispose of them safely.
- Consider scanning paper documents instead of having to physically move them on and off your desk many times.
- Ensure you allow sufficient time to put away or lock away documents and clear the desk.
- Use a cross-cut shredder or the confidential waste bins to dispose of personal or sensitive documents.

Related Policies and Documents

Storage of Information Security Policy Simple Rules for Successful Smarter Working

Related Legal and Regulatory Obligations

UK Data Protection Act