

WELSHPOOL TOWN COUNCIL

SECURITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Welshpool Town Council aims to ensure that the procedure it adopts in the utilisation of confidential information complies with the highest ethical standards and fully endorses and adheres to the eight principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Equality act 2010. Staff and Councilors strive to handle information in compliance with the following:

- Data Protection Act 1998
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, and
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act (see separate policy)

These procedures foster a relationship of trust with individuals and/or their representatives, employees and third party agencies and organisations.

All parts of this document related to both Councilors and Staff alike.

Principles

The principles require that personal data shall:

- Be processed fairly and lawfully and shall not be processed unless certain conditions are met;
- Be obtained for a specified and lawful purpose and shall not be processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose;
- Be adequate, relevant and not excessive for those purposes;
- Be accurate and where necessary be kept up to date;
- Not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose;
- Be processed in accordance with the data subject's rights;
- Be kept secure from unauthorized or unlawful processing and protected against accidental loss, destruction or damage by using the appropriate technical and organisational measures;
- Not be transferred to a country or territory outside the European Economic Area, unless that country or territory ensures adequate level of protection for the rights and freedoms of data subjects in relation to the processing of personal data.

In order to meet those requirements Welshpool Town Council will abide by the Elements of the Policy.

Elements of Policy

Information Gathering

All information gathered in the course of discussion with an individual, whether or not a third party is present, should be relevant and regarded as confidential. In normal circumstances no information about an individual should be passed on to another party or organisation without the permission of the individual concerned.

Individuals will be informed of the relevance and purpose of the information gathered and will have the opportunity to evaluate this process and comment on the service provided. They will have the opportunity to remain anonymous.

The individual concerned must be consulted and approve information that may be made available to another party or organization. Any limitations with regard to confidentiality should be made very clear to the individual or member of staff at the earliest stage. In situations where the purpose of the transfer of information is to the benefit of the individual, their approval should be sought in a balanced and unbiased way.

All information will be accurate and up to date including referrals made and outcomes in terms of employment and training. Copies of documents and records produced by the organisation referring to the individual will be made available if requested.

In exceptional circumstances, where for example an individual may be a potential danger to staff, to a minor or to themselves, the staff member concerned must refer the matter to the Town Clerk – who will consider the matter and decide on any action. Where a breach of confidentiality is considered necessary then legal advice must be sought.

Security of Information

All records about an individual remain the property of that individual. All such information must remain confidential and be up to date, and be stored in a secure environment. Councilors and staff must be aware of the existence of the type of records kept on individuals e.g. forms, computer databases, personal development plans, certificates, personnel records etc., and be aware of the content of such records.

Staff and Councilors will be aware that confidentiality of information is very important and that breaching confidentiality could lead to disciplinary procedures being implemented.

As a clear guide – if a matter was discussed in a formal Council or Committee meeting at which the public could have attended then matters discussed are not considered confidential. If a matter was discussed in a formal Council or Committee meeting at which the public would not have attended then matters discussed are considered to be confidential.

Written records will be stored in appropriate filing cabinets or store cupboards which will be kept locked. Computer records containing personal information will have password protection, creating restrictions on workstation access and file access (two levels). Back up will be securely stored.

Individuals or other visitors to Welshpool Town Council premises will not be allowed to use computers that have access to client or staff personal information unless they are properly supervised. Similarly no such person will be allowed access to the filing cabinets or store cupboards containing such information.

When leaving an office for the day, staff must ensure all filing cabinets and store cupboards containing personal information are properly secured and all computers correctly closed down.

Security of Premises

Only key staff who work at the Council offices and emergency key holders will be issued with keys to those premises. All keys will be signed for and returned if leaving the employment or service of Welshpool Town Council.

It is the responsibility of the last person leaving premises to ensure that all windows are secure, unnecessary electrical equipment is turned off, no fire hazard exists, fire doors are closed and all lights are turned off before securing the building. Where an alarm system exists, then this will be activated.

Anyone who has any enquiries or complaints regarding Data Protection can contact the Council who has approved this policy, in writing.

Disclosure

We aim to provide the best possible opportunity for our citizens and staff. If you have any particular requirements that will improve our services please let us know as soon as possible and we will endeavor to make reasonable changes. Your right for that information to remain confidential will not be jeopardized and will be treated with extreme urgency and respect. Where possible we will make reasonable adjustment to accommodate need.

R A Robinson Town Clerk
11th February 2015

