

BISHOP'S STORTFORD TOWN COUNCIL CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION – DATA PROTECTION

The Town Council, both as an employer and as a Local Authority, needs to hold records and to process large volumes of data involving both personal and commercially - sensitive information. This note concerns these data sources.

All data encountered by staff in the course of their work is to be treated, on the basis of good practice, as confidential to this Council and must always be treated accordingly. As such, information should be communicated only on a "need to know" criterion - particularly to external parties - and always having regard to its nature and (potential) application. In any instances of doubt, requests for data should be channelled through the Town Clerk or Asst Town Clerk.

Data covered basically falls into two distinct sources:

IT systems information held in any computerised format automatically is covered by the Data Protection Acts and the Computer Misuse Act 1990, and the Town Council is registered for use within the following systems:-

- (a) Personnel/Employee Administration (including payroll) Sage.
- (b) Allotment and Cemetery databases
- (c) Customer/Client Administration (administration of accounts - Omega).
- (d) CCTV Systems

Other Sources this includes all (non-computerised) written and oral material received during the course of the Council's work such as correspondence to or from members of the public, Town Council employees, Councillors and businesses.

This note merely is to formally bring to the attention of all staff the need for care at all times when handling, and particularly when transmitting, any data and so as to avoid "unauthorised access" to, or disclosure of (including unintentionally), personal or confidential information. The Town Council itself is obliged to take "appropriate security measures" but this needs to be supplemented, of course, by relying upon all its staff personally to take precautions to avoid any breaches resulting during the course of their work (eg need for secure storage and disposal of personal data).

In this last respect, staff need also remember that disciplinary action may follow in the event of any breaches of the Data Protection Act and staff may be held personally liable for criminal prosecution under the above Acts for any abuse of the Authority's computer systems.