

MELTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

DATA PROTECTION ACT 1998

CLEAR DESK POLICY

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To ensure that all personal data is fully protected under the Data Protection legislation against misuse or loss.

1.2 The Seventh Principle of the Data Protection Act 1998 states that :

“Appropriate technical and organisational measures shall be taken against unauthorised or unlawful processing of personal data and against accidental loss or destruction of, or damage to, personal data.”

2. DEFINITION OF PERSONAL DATA

2.1 Personal data falls into two categories, but the phrase when used includes both, essentially :

- ‘Personal data’ in its simplest form means name and address and telephone number.
- ‘Sensitive Personal data’ includes references to religious or other similar beliefs, racial or ethnic origin, trade union membership, physical or mental health conditions, sexual life, alleged offence, criminal proceedings.

3 PROCESSING

3.1 Processing means any method of handling data for whatever purpose, whether it is paper-based, computerised or digitised, and recorded sound and camera images.

4 PROCEDURE

Best Practice to maintain compliance with this principle, requires that:

- All paper files are securely locked away in filing systems each day at the end of business
- No papers containing personal data are left in exposed trays/boxes waiting to be dealt with, pending decisions or awaiting filing, and that loose paper is kept to a minimum
- No CD-ROMs or memory sticks are left on desks or in computers/laptops, but are locked away in cabinets when not in use

- Laptop computers are securely locked away when not in use
- If you leave your desk, log out of your computer/laptop if it is to be unattended
- If your computer/laptop is in a public area, ensure that it is not overlooked
- Fax machines are not left unattended, and incoming mail and faxes are to be treated in the same way as other paper documents
- All paper and computer media is disposed of securely and safely when no longer required
- That users switch off computers/laptops at the end of every working day
- Mobile telephones, PDAs and other similar equipment should be operated as strictly as laptops, given that many officers will be using these to access emails, contact details, and other items of Council business.

Following these guidelines will not only meet the Seventh Principle, but may also limit damage by fire, flood or explosion to these data sources.