

Things you need to know Cyber Security, Councillor Standards and the Worker Protection Act

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Agenda for today's session

- 1 **Cyber Security**
- 2 **Duties to prevent discrimination**
- 3 **The Code of Conduct**
- 4 **Declaring and registering interests – most common questions**
- 5 **Proposed changes to the law**
- 6 **Your questions**

What is cyber security?



Why are we telling you about cyber security?

56% of businesses and 62% of charities have reported breaches or attacks in the last 12 months

Attacks can lead to loss of personal information and could cost us taxpayers money

2025 has seen a number of significant cyber security breaches

Why is this important

Our systems can offer good protection, but we are only as safe as the good sense of our users.

You are a data controller and are personally responsible for personal data you hold.



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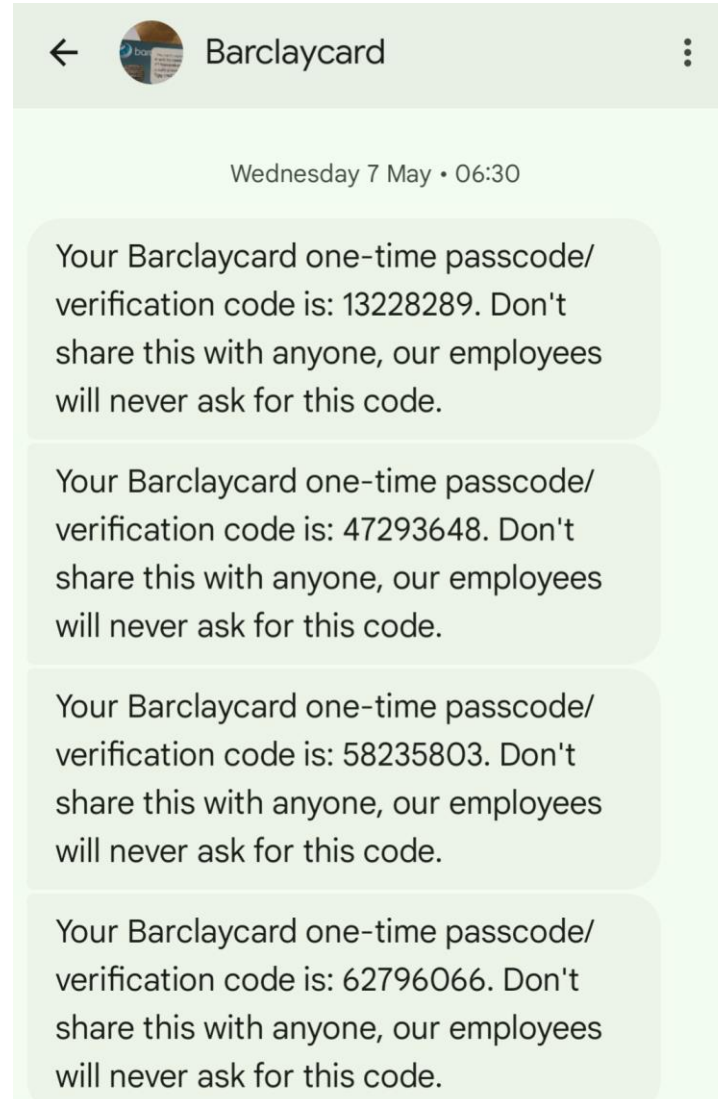
MARKS & SPENCER





“Revolut has warned me that this is likely a scam, and are unlikely to recover my funds if I proceed with this transaction”.

Does it happen here?



More information



[Scam Inc. from Economist Podcasts+](#)

How passwords are hacked.....

Interception

Passwords can be intercepted as they travel over a network.



Brute force

Automated guessing of billions of passwords until the correct one is found.

Key logging

Installing a keylogger to intercept passwords when they are entered.



Manual guessing

Details such as dates of birth or pet names can be used to guess passwords.

Shoulder surfing

Observing someone typing in their password.



Phishing & coercion

Using social engineering techniques to trick people into revealing passwords.



Stealing passwords

Insecurely stored passwords can be stolen, such as ones written on sticky notes and kept near (or on) devices.



Data breaches

Using the passwords leaked from data breaches to attack other systems.

Stealing hashes

Stolen hash files can be broken to recover the original passwords.



Password spraying

Trying a small number of commonly-used passwords to access a large number of accounts.



Number of Characters	Numbers Only	Lowercase Letters	Upper and Lowercase Letters	Numbers, Upper and Lowercase Letters	Numbers, Upper and Lowercase Letters, Symbols
4	Instantly	Instantly	Instantly	Instantly	Instantly
5	Instantly	Instantly	57 minutes	2 hours	4 hours
6	Instantly	46 minutes	2 days	6 days	2 weeks
7	Instantly	20 hours	4 months	1 year	2 years
8	Instantly	3 weeks	15 years	62 years	164 years
9	2 hours	2 years	791 years	3k years	11k years
10	1 day	40 years	41k years	238k years	803k years
11	1 weeks	1k years	2m years	14m years	56m years
12	3 months	27k years	111m years	917m years	3bn years
13	3 years	705k years	5bn years	56bn years	275bn years
14	28 years	18m years	300bn years	3tn years	19tn years
15	284 years	477m years	15tn years	218tn years	1qd years
16	2k years	12bn years	812tn years	13qd years	94qd years
17	28k years	322bn years	42qd years	840qd years	6qn years
18	284k years	8tn years	2qn years	52qn years	463qn years

Time it takes a hacker to brute force your password in 2025

Hardware: 12 x RTX 5090
 Password hash: bcrypt (10)



Hive Systems

Read more and download at hivesystems.com/password

Top 10 most popular passwords in the UK





Cyber.mp4

What Makes a Good Password?

- **At least 14 characters long (ideally 16 characters or more)**
- **A password should include a combination of letters (both uppercase and lowercase), numbers and characters**
- **Not recycled - have a unique password for each online account**
- **A password shouldn't include any of your personal information like your birthday or address. It's also best not to include any information that can be accessed on social media like children's or pets' names or your hobbies or football team.**
- **It shouldn't contain consecutive letters or numbers (i.e. ABCD, 1234, etc.).**
- **It shouldn't be the word "password" or the same letter or number repeated.**

Phishing

When criminals use scam emails, text messages or phone calls to trick us

- Does it look right?
- Were you expecting it?
- How do they refer to you?
- Is the logo correct?
- Do you need to do something now?
- Do you know the sender?
- Is it too good to be true?

From: support@ricrosoft.co.uk ✓
Sent: 16/01/2023 11:44
To: Bob Smith <Bob.Smith@company.com> ✓
Subject: Urgent Action Needed! ✓



Microsoft Account

Verify your account

We detected some unusual activity about your recent sign in for your Microsoft account. you might be signing in from a new location app or device. ✓

To help keep your account safe. We've blocked access to your inbox, contacts list and calendar for that sign in. Please review your recent activity and we'll help you secure your account. To regain access you'll need to confirm that the recent activity was yours. ✓

<http://account.liive.com/ResetPassword.aspx>

Thanks,
The Microsoft Team

From: support@microsoft.co.uk
Sent: 16/01/2023 11:44
To: Bob Smith <Bob.Smith@company.com>
Subject: Unusual Sign In Activity



Microsoft Account

Verify your account

We detected some unusual activity about a recent sign in for your Microsoft account bo*****@company.com. you might be signing in from a new location app or device.

To help keep your account safe. We've blocked access to your inbox, contacts list and calendar for that sign in. Please review your recent activity and we'll help you secure your account. To regain access you'll need to confirm that the recent activity was yours.

[Review recent activity](#)

Thanks,
The Microsoft Team

Scammers stole £47m from HMRC in phishing attack



Malware



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

Malicious software that includes viruses, Trojans, worms or code or content that could have an adverse impact on organisations or individuals

Weak password allowed hackers to sink a 158-year-old company



Data theft at Glasgow City Council in June 2025



Ransomware

Malware that locks victims out of their data or systems and only allows access once money is paid

[Ransomware attacks happening every day in UK, intelligence agents say | BBC News](#)



RANSOMWARE ATTACK

Personal files are encrypted

Have 5 days to submit the payment!!!

Have the Private key you need to pay

Your files will be lost

2024 cyberattack linked to death of patient



Ransomware attack costs Hackney at least £12 million

Crucial council systems, including housing benefit payments and social care services, were not functioning.

Gloucester City Council reprimanded over cyber attack



Cyber attack recovery effort cost Hackney Council over £12m last year

By [Julia Gregory, Local Democracy Reporter](#) | Thursday 13 October 2022 at 21:28



Hackney Town Hall

If you are unsure, report it via the Assyst Portal using IT Security Concerns or speak to a member of the team.

- Take screen shots
- Provide the sender's email address, date and time of the email, content of the email
- Do not download or open the attachment or file
- Do not close your machine down before reporting
- After reporting delete from your inbox and deleted folder immediately

Do not share

your login details or have the same as other logins

Do not
bypass

security controls

Do not

setup autoforwards

Access

Only access your ECC account from safe countries

Do not install

applications without seeking guidance

What should you be doing?



Physical security – ID pass, training, lockable storage, taking care on the train, bus, when working in other locations, check if you can access your emails when abroad (safe countries), training and awareness raising



Cyber security – Strong password, don't share it, don't reuse passwords, lock your laptop, don't auto forward emails, take time and care with links and emails. Take care with external files

Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023

Sexual harassment

A harasses B if—

(a) A engages in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, and

(b) the conduct has the **purpose or effect** of—

(i) violating B's dignity, or

(ii) creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for B.

ECC must take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment. If an employment tribunal finds that sexual harassment has occurred anywhere in ECC and that ECC has not taken reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment (even if those steps wouldn't have prevented the harassment in question) then compensation can be increased by up to 25%.



Sexual **HARASSMENT**

IN THE WORK PLACE

WHAT CONSTITUTES SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

OFFERING
BENEFITS

for a sexual
favor

UN-
WANTED

sexual
advancements

THREATS

or retaliation
to "no"

VISUAL
CONDUCT

suggestive
gestures

VERBAL
CONDUCT

derrogatory
comments

PHYSICAL
CONDUCT

body position
or touching

Verbal conduct in the workplace



What do Councillors need to do?

We have training for employees, but training for employees on its own is not likely to count as reasonable steps.

Everyone in ECC, officer or member, must do what they can to ensure that the culture is appropriate:

- **Don't behave that way yourself**
- **Call out bad behaviour if you see it**
 - Don't tolerate it from anyone
 - If you don't feel you can call it out report it as soon as possible to the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer or the Head of Democracy and Transparency

Why is it important to know what the code says?

The LGA code says:

As a Councillor:

I undertake Code of Conduct training provided by my local authority

I cooperate with any Code of Conduct investigation and/or determination

I do not intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is likely to be involved with the administration of any investigation or proceedings

I comply with any sanction imposed on me following a finding that I have breached the Code of Conduct.

Registering interests

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs)

- **Must be registered and declared.**

Criminal offence if you:

- Fail to register
- Participate in a decision where you have a DPI
- Allegations of the above are investigated by the Police. If you are convicted:
 - Community sentence
 - Removal from office.

'Other Registrable interests'

- **Must** be registered and declared
- ECC code of conduct

Current sanctions include:

- 'name and shame'
- withdraw discretionary benefits to Councillors
- 'Code interests' must be registered and declared.

Four points for you to remember...

You are responsible for keeping your registration of interests complete and up to date

You have to register your interests and those of your spouse/partner

You don't have to register interests of friends or other relatives but you **may** need to declare them

You must register interests within 28 days.

What must I register



Seven categories DPLs:

Paid roles and businesses

Sponsorships - election expenses or expenses as a councillor

Contracts between you or your companies and ECC

Land you own or rent in Essex

Licences you have to occupy land in Essex

Land companies in which you have an interest etc. rent from the Council

Significant shareholdings of companies with a place of business in Essex.



Other Registerable interests

External bodies to which ECC has appointed you

Unpaid directorships

Membership or a position of management or control in a body

- which exercises **functions of a public nature**;
- which is directed to **charitable** purposes; or
- one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any **political party** or **trade union**).

Declaring an interests - DPIs

If you 'have a DPI' in an **item of business at a meeting** then you have to declare and leave the room during consideration of the matter.... **And not take an individual decision** unless

- You have a dispensation
- You are taking part as a member of the public and leave as soon as you have made your contribution

Don't declare a DPI and stay in the room or be involved in a decision or take a CMA.... unless you have a dispensation.

If you declare an unregistered DPI at a meeting, and then don't add it to the register of interests then you need to register it within 28 days or it is an offence.

If you are a district councillor, you may be unable to consider a matter which directly affects the other authority (eg financial transactions or planning matters)

Declaring an 'Other Registerable Interest' (ORI)

Always declare an interest if an item affects or directly relates to the ORI

If item **DIRECTLY RELATES** to the financial interest or well being of an ORI you must leave the room and not take part.

If item **AFFECTS** the financial interest or well being (but not directly) you must leave the room if

- It affects you more than people in the division affected; and
- A reasonable member of the public would believe it would **affect your view of the wider public interest**

You may always stay in the room and speak as a member of the public if they are allowed to do the same.

Non registerable interests

You have a NRI in a matter if it affects the financial interest or wellbeing of you or a relative or close friend

If the matter **DIRECTLY RELATES** to your financial interest or well being or that of a relative or a close associate you must leave the room and not take part.

If it **AFFECTS** your financial interest or well being or that of a relative or a close associate you must leave the room if

- It affects you more than people in the division affected; and
- A reasonable member of the public would believe it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may always stay in the room and speak as a member of the public if they are allowed to do the same.

General behaviour



You **must not do** anything that will bring **your role** or **the local authority** into **disrepute**



You **must not** use the position to improperly get an advantage or disadvantage for yourself or any other person (financial advantage or otherwise)

Respecting other people and each other

You must treat other councillors and members of the public with respect

You must treat employees and volunteers working for ECC with respect and respect the role they play

You must treat employees and representatives of partner organisations with respect and respect for the role they play

You can't discriminate unlawfully against any person do anything that would cause the Council to unlawfully discriminate

You must not do anything which compromises or attempt to compromise the impartiality of anyone working on behalf of the Council

You must not bully or harass any person

Disclosing information

Don't disclose
confidential
information unless

- You have consent
- You are required by law to do so
- You disclose on a confidential basis purely to get professional legal advice

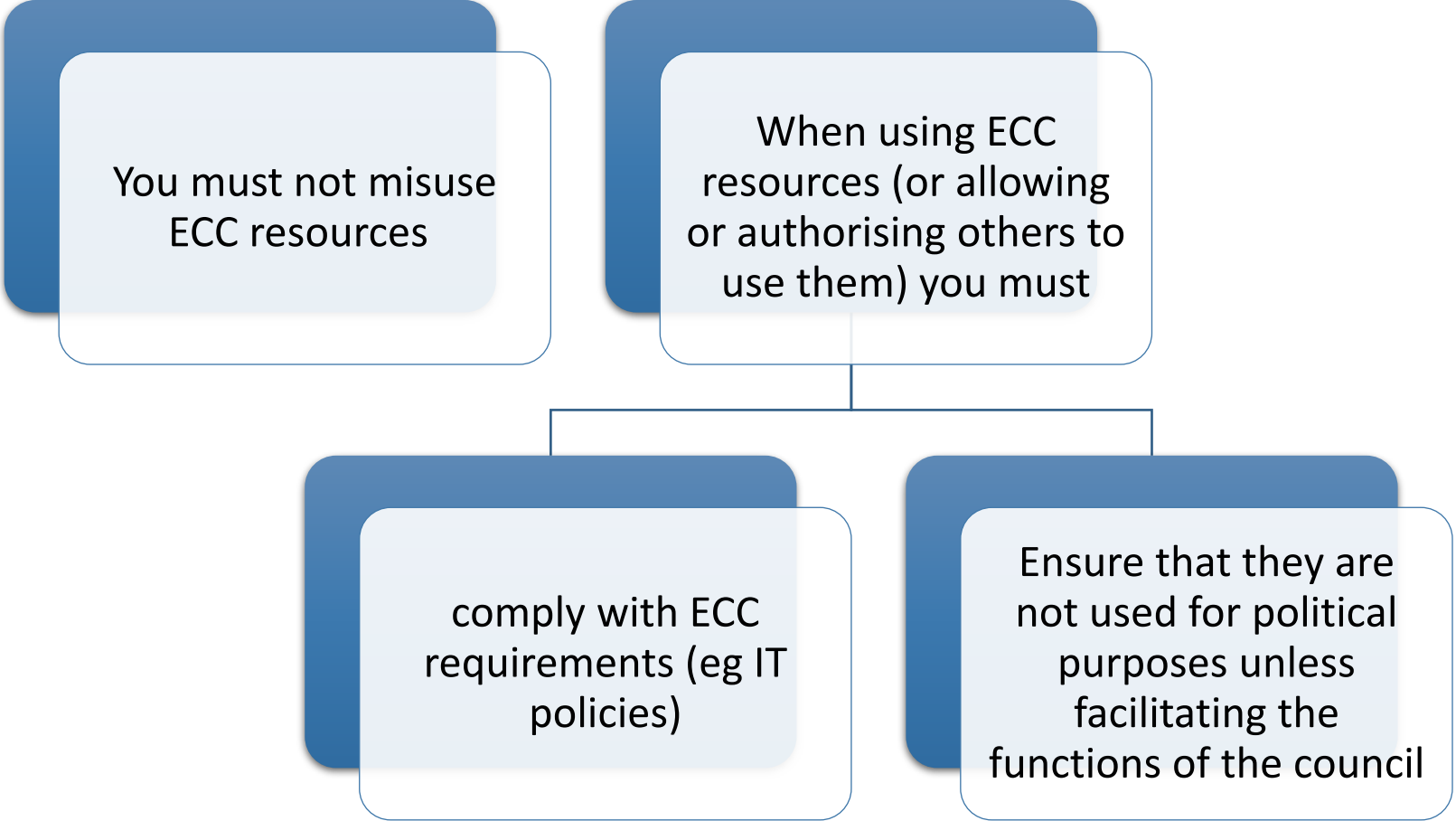
Don't improperly
use knowledge

- gained solely as a result of your role as a councillor for the advancement of myself, my friends, my family members, you employer or your business interests.

Do not prevent

- anyone from getting information that they are entitled to by law.

When using ECC Assets...



Gifts and hospitality



Members must register all gifts and hospitality with a value of £50 or more that they **accept or reject** in connection with their role as a County Councillor. This can be done by e-mailing democratic.services@essex.gov.uk



Registration must take place within 28 days



The register is published online and reviewed by Audit, Government and Standards Committee



Accepting gifts and hospitality needs careful consideration



Avoiding offers of gifts and hospitality

General	Election History	Party History	Division History	Members Interests
Committees	Outside Bodies	Training History	Hospitality and Gifts	
Allowances and Expenses				

Date	From	Description	Value
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Process

Complaints made in writing

Investigation decision assessed against criteria

Investigation

Hearing

All complaints are considered by an independent person



Proposed changes to the law – consultation



Mandatory minimum code of conduct



A requirement to convene formal standards committees to make decisions on code of conduct breaches, and publish the outcomes of all formal investigations



Introduction of the power for all local authorities to suspend councillors or mayors found in serious breach of their code of conduct and, as appropriate, interim suspension for the most serious and complex cases that may involve police investigations



A new category of disqualification for gross misconduct and those subject to a sanction of suspension more than once in a 5-year period



A role for a national body to deal with appeals



This information is issued by:
Essex County Council

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 [Essex_CC](#)

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