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Dear Colleague

Following an investigation into the recent temporary loss of a memory stick containing personal and sensitive data, the council is currently in the process of putting into place a new, stronger code of practice governing the use of memory sticks. It is essential that everyone who has access to electronic information understands and signs up to the code of practice.

The council takes its legal and ethical duty to safeguard personal data very seriously. We will be taking a number of steps to improve our current practices to protect staff, the council and our customers.

The first step has been a review of the council's use of memory sticks. As a result the decision has been made to:

1. Issue this letter to all council PC users accompanied by a strong, clear code of practice on the use of memory sticks.
2. Recall **all** council-owned memory sticks currently in use and issue new, encrypted ones only where they are absolutely necessary for service delivery. **This process will be prioritised during January 2009. Once completed, only encrypted memory sticks issued by the council may be used for work purposes.**

You will receive further instructions via your line manager about the recall of memory sticks and the implementation of the new code of practice during January 2009.

To support the process full guidance will be issued, including all necessary definitions, technical instructions and the forms for recording the issue of memory sticks and acceptance of the code of practice.

The code of practice will apply throughout the council. You will be asked to 'sign up' to this in the same way as you signed up to the council's codes of practice on the use of email and the internet when you first joined the council. We are working towards a simplified joint code of practice around all areas of data handling in future.

It's also important you understand:

- your personal legal duty under the Data Protection Act (DPA), and the DPA principles the council has promised to uphold;
- the risks to the council and to our customers of poor data security;
- the practical steps you must take to keep data secure; and
- the immediate steps you must take if you believe data security has been compromised.

These areas are all covered in the council's data handling guidelines that were recently re-issued to all services. The information is also available on the council intranet and can be found by looking up for 'data handling guidelines' in the site index. **If you are responsible for ensuring that colleagues are reminded of this information, you must make sure that this happens.**

The Council Business Plan states our commitments to reduce our carbon footprint and deliver excellence and value for money mean. To achieve this we are moving towards more modern, efficient and flexible ways of working. We do not want the council, or our staff, to miss out on the opportunities offered by new technology. But we need to balance this with our legal and moral obligation to safeguard the data we are entrusted with. Our residents have no choice but to trust us with their data. We must do everything we can to honour that trust.

Yours sincerely,



**Paul Rogerson**  
**Chief Executive**