



## **Incident Report regarding Councillor iPads**

**10<sup>th</sup> February 2022.**

At the Protocol Committee meeting on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> January a Councillor raised a concern that he had access to another Councillor's photos on his iPad.

### **Actions Taken**

Following the Protocol Committee meeting, a meeting of senior IS Department and Chief Executive's staff was immediately convened to investigate the cause of the issue. All affected parties were identified, Councillors were contacted and a risk assessment to the data subjects was carried out with the Data Protection Unit.

The source of the problem was quickly identified as a generic Apple ID, that had been initially used when the iPads were first configured. It became apparent that the generic apple account had not been removed from a number of iPads. The use of a shared Apple ID made it possible for multiple devices to sync their content to a single iCloud and therefore may have allowed Councillors to access any documents, images or contacts that had been backed-up to the iCloud by users of the shared account.

As soon as the source of the problem had been identified, a staff member from the Chief Executives Department accessed the iCloud account and confirmed that 320 photos and a limited number of contacts and notes had been auto-saved to the account.

The incident was formally reported internally to our Data Protection Unit in the Law Department on the afternoon of the 27<sup>th</sup> January.

Telephone contact was made with all Councillors on the afternoon of Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> January to ascertain the Apple ID that they were using on their IPAD. It was confirmed that 11 Councillors had the generic apple account on their devices. The Councillors concerned were asked to immediately sign out of the account and to return the iPad to the Chief Executive's Department so that they could be assigned a new Apple ID and any shared files removed.

11 Councillors iPads were affected. All the affected iPads have since been reset with their own new unique Apple ID and any shared files deleted.

An email was also issued to all Councillors on the evening of the 27<sup>th</sup> January updating them on the matter.

A precautionary notification was sent to the Data Protection Commissioner on 28<sup>th</sup> January and a further report is to be issued to the DPC.

### **Investigation Outcome**

Following an investigation by the IS Department they advised that in July 2016 they received a request from the Chief Executive's Department to purchase 16 iPads for use by Councillors for the Mod Gov project in. A further 19 iPads were purchased in January 2017. These iPads were configured to IS standards and set up with a generic Apple ID. An Apple account is necessary in order to access the Apple Store to allow the user to download apps, to install an email client and to access the iCloud for data storage. However, this account was only ever used to configure the iPad's that were being issued to Councillors during 2016 & 2017 to provide them access to the Mod Gov App and their City Council email. No access to corporate data is managed by this password.

Whilst a generic Apple ID was used for the configuration all of the iPads, the cloud sharing functionality had been disabled (as per User Mobile Device Policy in place at that time). Furthermore, Councillors were not provided with the password for the account which was held by the Chief Executive's Office for the purpose of managing these iPads.

Following the Local Elections in 2019 a further 35 iPads were purchased for newly elected Councillors to provide them access to Mod Gov. These were configured by the IS Department, with a unique Apple ID assigned for each Councillor. With unique Apple IDs now in place the IS Department enabled cloud sharing for these devices.

Despite efforts by Senior staff in both the IS and Chief Executive's Department it was not possible to determine the precise reason as to why the cloud sharing option was activated on a limited number of devices. However, since the devices were issued in 2016 and 2017 it has been necessary to update the IOS software and Apps on several occasions. It is possible that during that process that the iCloud sharing option defaulted to active which has resulted in the issue at hand.

### **Conclusion**

Once the issue was highlighted immediate action was taken, all Councillors were contacted and within a very short period of time all access to the limited information by a small number of councillors that was being shared was restricted and removed.

While initially there were concerns that there may have been access to personal information, following examination of the IPADs impacted it was apparent that this risk was significantly reduced as no notes were being shared. The unrestricted access to a limited amount of information was available to a very small number of Councillors.

All current procedures that are in place ensure that a unique apple ID is assigned to every user therefore this should never reoccur.

**Ruth Dowling**  
**Act. Senior Executive Officer**  
**Chief Executive's Department**

**Martina Hogan**  
**Assistant ICT Manager**  
**Information Systems Department**