

MINUTE ITEM 6

STRATA JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 JANUARY 2019

QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR LYONS

Who decides in Strata what is junk mail and what checks are made on this to ensure this is correct. My question is the result of the discovery that the LGiU (Local Government information Unit) to which the council subscribes was not going into my inbox, when I asked Strata staff I was told it was because they are blanket emails going to all councillors and was probably junk".

Answer

The identification of spam (unsolicited emails) and malicious emails uses a combination of automated and manually configured filtering. The automated element uses a global spam specialist 'MailShell' along with various internet block lists and continually updates its automatic rules as email arrives. On top of this the Strata Security and Compliance team builds up rules that target cyber threats and the worst types of spam 'sextortion' being a current example. Spam is held as some of this is not appropriate for a work environment and also spam is very time wasting for those receiving it, and therefore like most organisations Strata limits this where possible.

Given the number of emails received, with approximately 1000 per day stopped as Spam and about 300 for security reasons, there will occasionally be incorrect decisions made for spam. To overcome this, the team add exceptions that override the automatic systems and the Strata Service Desk and the Security and Compliance team review emails that are blocked.

In the case of the LGiU emails they were both sent in bulk and are sent via a company called MailChimp that are known to send spam emails, and have various help pages on their support area like this <https://mailchimp.com/help/my-campaigns-are-going-to-spam-folders/> that show that others also treat emails sent via them as potential spam.

Therefore in summary for Cllr Lyons, there are no wholesale decisions made by Strata staff about a particular email sender or that blanket emails to a wide variety of senders should be blocked. A mass send of emails will however increase the likelihood that these will be treated as spam along with being sent via certain email delivery companies, in this case MailChimp. Where blocking is notified we can release these and if an ongoing newsletter can create rules to let them through.