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Monday, 8th June 2009



Security fears as care

director has laptop stolen from city HQ



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By Andrew Picken

SECURITY fears have been raised after a laptop belonging to the city's top social care official was stolen from the council's headquarters.

The Evening News understands that a laptop belonging to Peter Gabbitas – the council's director of health and social care – was taken from an open plan office in Waverley Court, along with another laptop and a sum of money.

It is not thought that any sensitive information was on either computer, which were worth a total of £1,200, with council officials today saying they were mainly used for presentations and were also encrypted.

But opposition politicians called for a security review at the East Market Street office block.

Tory councillor Allan Jackson, who is convener of the council's audit committee, said: "It is very concerning that these laptops have gone missing even though as I understand it there was not any sensitise information on

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these particular machines.

"It is worth having another look at security arrangements and I will be writing to officials to see what can be done."

It is not thought the thieves were deliberately targeting Mr Gabbitas during the raid at the East Market Street office block.

Earlier this year, the Evening News revealed around £4,000 worth of items, including laptops and Blackberry phones, have gone missing from city council offices in the last two years.

The local authority has also admitted it has lost a total of 99 laptops or PCs across the whole organisation in the past five years.

Police chiefs today said there was no sign of a break-in at the offices after the raid, which took place between Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning.

A council spokeswoman said: "The laptops had the appropriate levels of encryption to protect any information held on them.

"We are working closely with the police in their investigations.

"All staff have also been reminded about their individual responsibility to protect their own and council property."

The last major problem with thieves at council offices was in 1992 when £1,000 of civic gifts were stolen from the City Chambers. The haul included lead crystal clocks, whisky miniatures and souvenir pens that city leaders stockpiled as gifts they usually presented to dignitaries visiting the Capital.

In 2004, city leaders spent £250,000 on introducing new security measures at the City Chambers amid fears the then-council headquarters could become a target for terrorists or thieves.

The revamp included a new reception area with new lifts, electronic doors and TV screens.

A police spokesman said: "Enquires are ongoing, and anyone with any information about the theft should get in touch with police immediately."

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