



IT POLICY FOR EMPLOYEES

1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance on how Parish Council staff and members should use the Council's computer equipment, software, internet access, and email systems. Computer and e-mail systems are a critical set of tools for the operation of the Parish Council and provide communication with professional sources and with members of the public. Therefore, to ensure that we are able to use our systems in the proper way we have devised a policy that provides maximum use of the facility whilst ensuring compliance with the legislation throughout.

These tools are essential for carrying out the Council's work, including communicating with colleagues, councillors, external organisations, and members of the public. To ensure these systems are used effectively, safely, and legally, this policy outlines the proper use of this technology within the Parish Council.

2. Use of Computer Equipment

In order to safeguard the Council's computer equipment and reduce the risk of contamination the following will apply :

- a) only authorised staff should have access to the Parish Council's computer equipment;
- b) unauthorised access to the computer facility will result in disciplinary action
- c) unauthorised copying and/or removal of computer equipment/software will result in disciplinary action, such actions could lead to dismissal employees.

3. Computer Software and Systems

- a) only authorised software may be used on any of the Parish Council's computer equipment;
- b) only software that is used in running the Parish Council's may be used;
- c) no software may be brought onto or taken from the Parish Council's premises without prior authorisation;

4. Virus Protection Procedure

To prevent virus contamination of the Council's computer systems the following must be

observed:

- USB memory sticks, external hard drives, CDs or DVDs must not be connected to the systems, and unauthorised software including public domain software, or internet downloads must not be used.

5. E-MAIL AND INTERNET POLICY

a) Internet

Where appropriate, duly authorised staff are encouraged to make use of the Internet as part of their official and professional activities. Attention must be paid to ensuring that published information has relevance to normal Parish Council before material is released in the Parish Council's name. Where personal views are expressed a disclaimer stating that this is the case should be clearly added to all correspondence. Intellectual property rights and copyright must not be compromised when publishing on the Internet. The availability and variety of information on the Internet has meant that it can be used to obtain material reasonably considered to be offensive. The use of the Internet to access and/or distribute any kind of offensive material, or material that is not work-related, leaves an individual liable to disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal.

b) Procedures – Acceptable/Unacceptable Use

- i. unauthorised or inappropriate use of the internet may result in disciplinary action which could result in summary dismissal.
- ii. the internet is made available for legitimate Parish Council use and matters concerned directly with the work of the Council. Employees using the internet should give particular attention to the following points:
 - i) comply with all of our internet standards;
 - ii) access during working hours should be for business use only;
 - iii) private use of the internet is prohibited on council owned equipment .
- iii. the Parish Council will not tolerate the use of the Internet system for unofficial or inappropriate purposes, including:
 - i. non-compliance of our social networking policy;
 - ii. connecting, posting or downloading any information unrelated to their employment and in particular pornographic or other offensive material;
 - iii. engaging in computer hacking and other related activities, or attempting to disable or compromise security of information contained on the Parish Council's computers.
 - iv. You are reminded that such activities (iii. and iv.) may constitute a criminal offence.

E-mail – Correct usage

The use of the e-mail system is encouraged as its appropriate use facilitates efficiency. Used correctly it is a facility that is of assistance to employees. Inappropriate use however causes many problems including distractions, time wasting and legal claims. The procedure below sets out the Parish Council's position on the appropriate use of the Council e-mail system :

- a) unauthorised or inappropriate use of the e-mail system may result in disciplinary action which could include summary dismissal.
- b) the e-mail system is available for communication and matters directly concerned with the legitimate business of the Company. Employees using the e-mail system should give particular attention to the following points:
 - i) comply with all Council communication standards;
 - ii) e-mail messages and copies should only be sent to those for whom they are particularly relevant;
 - iii) e-mail should not be used as a substitute for face-to-face communication or telephone contact. Abusive e-mails must not be sent. Hasty messages sent without proper consideration can cause upset, concern or misunderstanding;
 - iv) if the e-mail is confidential the user must ensure that the necessary steps are taken to ensure confidentiality. The Parish Council will be liable for infringing copyright or any defamatory information that is circulated either within the Parish Council or to external users of the system; and
 - v) offers or contracts transmitted by e-mail are as legally binding on the Parish Council as those sent on paper.
- c) The Company will not tolerate the use of the e-mail system for unofficial or inappropriate purposes, including:
 - i) any messages that could constitute bullying, harassment or other detriment;
 - ii) personal use (e.g. social invitations, personal messages, jokes, cartoons, chain letters or other private matters);
 - iii) on-line gambling;
 - iv) accessing or transmitting pornography;
 - v) transmitting copyright information and/or any software available to the user; or
 - vi) posting confidential information about, residents, other employees, the Parish Council or its clients or suppliers.

6. Monitoring

The Parish Council reserve the right to monitor all e-mail / internet activity by you for the purposes of ensuring compliance with our policies and procedures and of ensuring compliance with the relevant regulatory requirements. This includes monitoring of any additional accounts you may be requested to set up for the purposes of performing your work tasks, which are subject to the same rules as your work email account. Information acquired through such monitoring may be used as evidence in disciplinary proceedings. Monitoring your usage will mean processing your personal data. You may read more about the data we hold on you, why we hold it and the lawful basis that applies in the employee privacy notice.

7. Use of Social Networking Sites

Any work related issue or material that could identify an individual who is associated with the Council by means of employment, work, on a voluntary basis, or a work colleague, which could adversely affect the Parish Council, a resident, employee or volunteer, or our relationship with any client, must not be placed on a social networking site. This means that work related matters must not be made added to any social media site at any time either during, or outside of working hours and includes access via any computer equipment or mobile device. For more information please read our social media policy.

To be adopted at the December FGP committee meeting 2025