

INTERNET AND EMAIL ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

1. Introduction

The following outlines the Council's Acceptable Use Policy regarding e-mail and the Internet. The Policy has been developed to ensure that all members and employees are clear about expectations regarding Internet and e-mail in order to protect them and the Council from misuse of facilities and potential breach of the law. The Policy also ensures that the Council's IT facilities are used most effectively.

Employees are asked to ensure they understand the policy and abide by it. Any misuse may result in disciplinary action. Email and the Internet are provided by the Council to assist employees in carrying out their work. This applies equally to councillors covering for employees and when on Council business. Use of these services should support Council policies and objectives and reflect the Council's high standards of service.

Any abuses of this policy should be reported to your line manager or the Chairman. If you are uncertain about any aspects of this policy and how it applies to you, please discuss with your line manager or the Chairman.

2. Email

Personal Email Use

- 2.1 Personal use of the Parish Council's email address is NOT permitted.
- 2.2 No personal emails or information should be stored on the Council's computer.
- 2.3 Do not forward chain letters, jokes or other multiple mailings that are not business related. If the sender is known to you, it is your responsibility to tell them that you do not want to receive these.

Email Guidance

- 2.4 Email messages cannot be guaranteed to be private and secure: do not send confidential, sensitive or personal data via email unless approved by Council. Remember that any sent message could potentially be forwarded to others by the recipient.
- 2.5 No message should be sent, either internally or externally, which contains illegal, offensive, obscene, racist or abusive material (for example, pornography) or libellous, defamatory or discriminatory material, or material which may bring the Council into disrepute. You are responsible for emails you send. Emails could be used as evidence in a tribunal or other court proceedings.
- 2.6 Respect the rights of others when sending emails. Email should not be used to harass or discriminate against others. If you receive such an email bring it to the attention of your line manager or the Chairman.
- 2.7 Use the same level of professional language, spelling and grammar for emails that you would use for letters and other business correspondence.

- 2.8 Ensure that email messages sent to individuals or service addresses are properly dealt with if someone is on leave, off sick or otherwise out of the office for an extended period or has left the organisation.
- 2.9 Be aware that agreements made by email may have the same status as letters or formal contracts. Seek Council guidance before making any agreement by email.
- 2.10 If you receive emails from unknown sources and they contain attachments, they should not be opened as they may contain viruses.
- 2.11 It is important to keep virus software up-to-date and doing this is the responsibility of the user(s). Any downloaded or copied files must be virus checked first.
- 2.12 You may subscribe to newsgroups and mailing lists for essential business purposes only, after obtaining permission from your line manager or Chairman.
- 2.13 Ensure that you delete messages that are no longer needed.
- 2.14 Ensure that the computers are password protected and that you do not disclose your password to others. Ensure that your screen saver is also password protected.
- 2.15 The broadband password should be kept confidential within the Council and changed regularly.
- 2.16 Do not access email messages that are private and/or confidential where you are not the intended recipient.
- 2.17 Do not send large files (over 5mb) via email without checking with the recipient first.
- 2.18 Do not use email to transmit material that may infringe copyright or licensing laws.

Email monitoring

- 2.19 The Council reserves the right to view all emails stored on Parish Council equipment.
- 2.20 The Council also reserves the right to investigate all emails in connection with disciplinary or audit investigations, including where it is believed that the email system is being misused. Full co-operation will be given if law enforcement or regulatory agencies request information about email or Internet use by an employee if the council is satisfied that the request is for an appropriate purpose and proportionate, and that disclosure is legal. Information will not normally be disclosed other than in connection with a criminal investigation or pursuant to a court order.

3. Internet Use

Personal Internet Use

- 3.1 The Internet may be used for personal purposes but only outside working hours linked to a working visit to the office. Reasonable use of the internet would be up to an average of one hour per day, pro rata.
- 3.2 Sites should not be accessed if they are likely to contain illegal or offensive material, or material that may be considered obscene or abusive.
- 3.3 Systematic attempts to log onto sites containing illegal or offensive material or to blocked sites may amount to gross misconduct and result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.
- 3.4 The Council Internet service must not be used to access "chat rooms" and/or social networking sites.
- 3.5 The Council's email and internet facilities must not be used to operate a personal business (income generating or not).

Internet Guidance

- 3.6 Do not download any material that you suspect may contain a virus. All files should be downloaded using a PC with virus checking software installed. No unnecessary software should be downloaded (including screen savers).
- 3.7 Do not use material from the Internet without checking whether it is restricted by copyright or licensing laws.
- 3.8 Goods should not be purchased via the Internet unless authorised by the Parish Council or Finance & Staffing committee
- 3.9 Material which uses a significant amount of bandwidth e.g. MP3 or video files should not be downloaded.

Internet Monitoring

- 3.10 Do not access sites that are deemed undesirable; for example pornographic, racist or extreme violence sites. It is the personal duty of employees not to access illegal or offensive sites.
- 3.11 **Monitoring of individual Internet access.** Individual use of the Internet will be investigated where specific concerns have been raised. Examples of triggers for such investigation would be councillors / management concerns, whistle-blowing issues, cooperation with law enforcement agencies, as part of a disciplinary investigation, or where there has been evidence of systematic misuse. Monitoring may include the examination of records of sites accessed. The Council reserves the right to block access to sites.
- 3.12 Any attempts to alter Internet records or to disguise user identity could be treated as misconduct.

Date of adoption:

Date of review: