



E-MAIL AND INTERNET USE POLICY

Adopted:
Review: May 2025

Purpose

IT and communication play an essential role in the conduct of Council business.

This policy applies to all Council staff and councillors who use the Council's communications facilities. The parameters and restrictions are outlined below, and you are required to read them carefully. The purpose of this policy is to define acceptable email and internet use within working time.

General principles

You must use the Council's information technology and communications facilities sensibly, professionally, lawfully, consistently with your duties and in accordance with this policy and other Council rules and procedures.

At all times employees and councillors must behave with honesty and integrity and respect the rights and privacy of others in relation to electronic communication and information.

Every employee will be given access to the internet as appropriate to their job needs. For those who do not have daily computer (PC) access occasional access will be arranged, as necessary by the Parish Clerk.

All PC/network access will be through passwords, and no individual is permitted onto the system using another employee's password.

Employees are not permitted to share their password with anyone inside or outside the Council, except for the purposes of business continuity arrangements.

Passwords will not be auto saved on any device (they will need to be entered manually for each use).

All information relating to Council business operations is confidential. You must treat the Council's paper-based and electronic information with utmost care.

Many aspects of communication are protected by intellectual property rights which can be infringed upon in a number of ways. Downloading, copying, possessing and distributing material from the internet may be an infringement of copyright or of other intellectual property rights. An employee has responsibility for checking the legitimacy of information or images etc prior to use by or for the Council.

Particular care must be taken when using e-mail as a means of communication because all expressions of fact, intention and opinion in an e-mail may bind you and/or the Council and can be produced in court in the same way as other kinds of written statements.

E-mail use for personal purposes

Employees' work e-mail addresses should not be used to send personal e-mails.

Internet use for personal purposes

Employees are not permitted to use the internet on a Council computer, laptop, tablet or Council mobile phone during work time for personal use.

Unauthorised use of e-mail and internet

The Council will not tolerate use of e-mail and internet for unofficial or inappropriate purposes, including:

- any messages that could constitute bullying, harassment, intimidation, or detriment
- accessing social networking sites such as Facebook (unless it is the Council's own social media site for Council business) using Council equipment or during work time
- on-line gambling
- accessing or transmitting pornography
- accessing other offensive, obscene or otherwise unacceptable material
- transmitting copyright information and/or any software available to the user
- posting confidential information about employees, the Council or its contractors or suppliers.

Downloading of material

To prevent the introduction of virus contamination into the software system the following must be observed:

- unauthorised software including public domain software, magazine cover disks/CDs or internet downloads must not be used; and
- all software must be virus checked by the *[Parish Clerk/XXXX]* using standard testing procedures before being used.

On-line blogs

It is not permitted for employees to contribute to on-line blogs during working hours or using a PC belonging to the Council. The following rules apply outside of working hours:

- personal blogs should contain a disclaimer that the views expressed on it are personal views of the author only
- you should not at any time make comments in a blog which bring the Council into disrepute
- you should not reveal confidential Council information, or information on Council contractors/suppliers etc
- you should not at any time make comments in a blog which amount to bullying, harassment or any other detriment towards Council employees/councillors/contractors/suppliers or any other individual working in connection with the Council.

Storage of e-mails

Employees and councillors should ensure they regularly audit their Council business e-mails to archive or delete those that contain information that is no longer required, in order for the Council to comply with its obligations under current data protection legislation and UK GDPR 2018.

The Council's website

Unless the member of staff is responsible for the upkeep of the Council's website as part of their role, they are not permitted to add anything to the website without express permission of the *[committee/Council/parish clerk]*.

Monitoring

The Council is ultimately responsible for all business communications but subject to that will, so far as possible and appropriate, respect your privacy and autonomy. The Council may monitor employees business communications for business reasons.

Enforcement

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action being taken against you. If there is anything in this policy that you do not understand, please discuss it with *[the Parish Clerk/Staffing Committee]*.

(Source: CIPD HR Inform)