



# IT POLICY FOR COUNCILLORS

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## 1) Introduction

The purpose of this IT Policy is to provide a clear framework for councillors of the Parish Council regarding the responsible and appropriate use of internet-based communications. This includes email, websites, and social media platforms.

These tools play a vital role in how the Parish Council communicates with members of the public, outside organisations, and within the council. To ensure consistency, professionalism, and compliance with relevant legislation, all councillors are expected to follow this policy when conducting Parish Council business. Councillors need to be very careful when engaging with members of the public in their personal capacity as it is likely that comments they make will be taken as the Council's view. If anyone asks what has been said in a Council meeting, they should be referred to the official minutes of the meeting, which are available on the Council's website.

## 2) Internet Use

Councillors are encouraged to make appropriate use of the internet in the course of their official duties, including research and communication.

- Any material accessed, shared, or published online in connection with council business must be relevant and appropriate.
- Councillors must not use the internet to access or distribute material that is illegal, discriminatory, defamatory, offensive, or unrelated to council duties.
- All use must reflect the standards expected of individuals in public office and should uphold the reputation of the Parish Council.

## 3) Email Use

Councillors are expected to:

- Use their designated Parish Council email address for all council-related correspondence.
- Ensure that emails are written in a professional tone and are relevant to council matters.
- Avoid forwarding or distributing confidential or sensitive information without proper authority.
- Be aware that emails may be subject to Freedom of Information requests and should be treated as formal records of communication.

### Email Retention:

- Once an issue has been resolved or actioned, the related email correspondence should be deleted.

- Councillors should avoid storing emails unnecessarily, as this may increase the risk of non-compliance with data protection regulations (Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR).
- Only retain information that is required for ongoing council business or legal purposes, and ensure it is stored securely.

#### **4) Social Media**

Where councillors use social media (e.g., Facebook and Instagram or other platforms.) in their role as a councillor or in reference to council business, the following standards apply:

- Councillors should clearly distinguish between personal views and official council positions. If expressing personal opinions, a disclaimer should be included (e.g., *“These are my personal views and not those of the Parish Council”*).
- Councillors must not post content that could be seen as offensive, abusive, defamatory, or discriminatory.
- Confidential or sensitive council matters must not be discussed on public platforms.
- Councillors should refrain from engaging in arguments or contentious exchanges online that could damage the council's reputation or lead to formal complaints.
- The Parish Council have their own Facebook and Instagram sites which will reflect the Council's view, and it is recommended that these are used instead of member's personal social media accounts
- To ensure that social media posts are legally and factually correct, Councillors are asked to run any posts past the Clerk before putting them on their personal account. They should also refer any concerns regarding social media to the Clerk.

#### **5) Compliance**

Failure to comply with this policy may result in referral to the Monitoring Officer or action under the Members' Code of Conduct. Councillors are reminded that online and electronic behaviour is subject to the same standards of public accountability as conduct in meetings or in person.

Fiona Hensher

October 2025

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