

Cogenhoe & Whiston Parish Council

Internet & 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 councillors 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.

Email and the Internet are provided by the Council to assist councillors and employees in carrying out their work. This applies equally to councillors covering for employees. Use of these services should support Council policies and objectives and reflect the Council's high standards of service.

If you are aware of any abuses of this policy they should be reported to the Chairman. If you are uncertain about any aspects of this policy and how it applies to you, please discuss with the Chairman.

2. Email Guidance

2.1 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 message you send could potentially be forwarded to others by the recipient.

2.2 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.

2.3 Respect the rights of others when sending emails. Email should not be used to harass or discriminate.

2.4 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.

2.5 If you receive emails from unknown sources and they contain attachments, they should not be opened as they may contain viruses.

2.6 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.

2.7 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.

- 2.8 The broadband password should be kept confidential within the Council and changed regularly.
- 2.9 Do not use email to transmit material that may infringe copyright or licensing laws.

Email monitoring

- 2.10 The Council reserves the right to view all emails stored on Parish Council equipment.
- 2.11 The Council also reserves the right to investigate all emails in connection with disciplinary or audit investigations, including where we suspect 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

- 3.1 Sites should not be accessed if they are likely to contain illegal or offensive material, for example, pornography, or material that may be considered obscene or abusive.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 The Council's email and Internet facilities must not be used to operate a personal business (income generating or not).

Internet Guidance

- 3.4 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).
- 3.5 Do not use material from the Internet without checking whether it is restricted by copyright or licensing laws.

Signed.....
Chairman
Cogenhoe & Whiston Parish Council

Reviewed & updated
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