

## **IT ACCEPTABLE USAGE, DATA PROTECTION AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

### **Document Purpose**

The Town Council recognises that it has a legal obligation to secure confidential information. Communication mediums need to be managed effectively to ensure data is protected whilst sharing relevant information. Social media provides a medium where data is readily available and the Town Council has a responsibility to communicate fairly and without bias.

This document provides the policy framework through which data can be managed and communicated and covers:

- IT Acceptable Usage & Data Protection
- Social Media

### **IT Acceptable Usage & Data Protection**

The Town Council will abide by the data protection principles defined by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) <https://ico.org.uk> .

- a) Personal data shall be processed fairly and lawfully and, in particular, shall not be processed unless –
  - i) at least one of the conditions in point b is met, and
  - ii) in the case of sensitive personal data, at least one of the conditions in point c is also met.
- b) Personal data shall be obtained only for one or more specified and lawful purposes, and shall not be further processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose or those purposes.
- c) Personal data shall be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose or purposes for which they are processed

All Staff and Councillors are required to read and comply with the conditions of this policy in respect of the way in which the communications mechanisms are utilised.

The policy includes computers and all other electronic media.

1. The Council recognises that reasonable use of the Town Council's e-mail facilities to communicate brief personal non offensive messages is acceptable and is a privilege that the Council is prepared to allow, but the amount of time spent must not be abused or it will be stopped.
2. The Council recognises that access to professional information by e-mail or through websites is a necessary requirement of the job of the Town Clerk and other staff and is permitted.
3. Staff members are expected to use technology in a courteous, reasonable and responsible manner. The following activities are not acceptable and anyone found to

be involved in them may face disciplinary action which in certain instances will be considered to be gross misconduct:

- Receiving, sending or displaying messages or pictures that are offensive or may be construed to be offensive in nature;
  - Using obscene language;
  - Improper use of e-mail and internet;
  - Damaging computers, computers systems or computer networks;
  - Violating copyright laws;
  - Using others' passwords and identities;
  - Issuing of passwords to third parties unless authorised to do so;
  - Trespassing in others' folders, works or files;
  - Intentionally wasting limited resources;
  - Employing the system for commercial purposes;
  - Employing the system for illegal activities;
  - Downloading any commercial software;
  - Personal mobile phones must only be used during council meetings to conduct council business only subject to an emergency.
4. The Council encourages electronic communications with local, national and international organisations.
  5. The Council cannot control and is not responsible for the accuracy or content of information gathered over the internet. Security is maintained by appropriate software, internal computer security settings and passwords.
  6. It is a requirement of the Council and the duty of all staff to avoid deliberate use of the Council's internet connections and technology for inappropriate use. Staff members should immediately alert the Town Clerk, or the Town Mayor of any suspect material found stored on any computer or elsewhere on the premises.
  7. The computer equipment and software must be used as installed. Staff members may not install/uninstall, delete or change anything on Council computers. Any requirements to change anything may only be authorised by the Town Clerk.
  8. The Council uses a virus-checker on the computers. Staff members may not load disks or memory sticks that have not been virus checked by the system.
  9. Access to chat rooms, gaming and other associated sites is not permitted on Town Council computers.
  10. The Town Council's email address and IT equipment are to be used solely for Town Council business and must not be used for other personal use.
  11. The Town Council's IT Equipment can be accessed by all Staff.

## **Social Media**

Social media is a generic term for sharing options, gossip, discussions, stories, video, pictures and even information electronically. The key feature of such systems is that they can be accessed in different ways – via computers, tablets and phones.

Examples of popular social media tools include: Twitter, Facebook, Wikipedia, YouTube, Pinterest, Snip It, LinkedIn and Google Plus. Groupings of interest are a natural feature of the development of such systems with people with similar interests being attracted to share information.

When staff and Councillors are using social media sites, they should always follow these guidelines:

- Information published on Social media should be deemed relevant to the Town Council or the community that it represents;
- Information should be accurate, fair, thorough and transparent;
- It should be noted that what is published will be in the public domain indefinitely;
- Compliance with data protection, intellectual property and copyright laws should be adhered to;
- Details about customers, partners, or suppliers should not be referred to without their prior written approval (ensuring no advertisement of the services or goods of third parties)
- Staff and Councillors must refrain from promoting themselves as working for the Council in a way which has, or may have, the effect of bringing the Council into disrepute;
- Staff and Councillors must not disclose personal data or information about the Council or its service users, employees or Councillors that could breach the Data Protection Act 2018 (e.g. Photographs, images);
- Staff and Councillors must not make any defamatory remarks about the Council, its service users, employees, Councillors, members of the public or conduct themselves in a way that is detrimental to the Council.