



# Weldon Parish Council

## Electronic Communication Devices - Acceptable Usage Policy

**Electronic communication devices include personal computers, laptop computers, iPads, tablets, smart phones, mobile phones, faxes, scanners and the telephone system. The primary purpose of such communication tools is to facilitate the day-to-day business activities of Weldon Parish Council.**

### **Part A - Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer (RFO)**

**It is currently the policy of Weldon Parish Council to issue the Parish Clerk/RFO with a laptop on which to undertake council business - this does not constitute a personal benefit to the Clerk/RFO. It is possible in the future that other electronic devices may be issued should it be deemed appropriate and necessary for council business.**

### **Key Principals**

**All electronic communication devices should be used in a manner appropriate to a reputable professional public body. The terms of this Policy apply to anyone issued with one or more of such devices and the key principals are:**

- You must comply with any relevant legislation appertaining to the usage of such devices.
- You must ensure the security of the data contained on your device. Laptops and/or PCs must be 'locked' when you are not at your desk, i.e. press control, alt and delete together then select lock. Mobile phones/tablets must be password protected. PCs must be switched off at the end of your working day.
- You must use the devices in a manner acceptable to Weldon Parish Council
- You must ensure your online conduct is of the same professional standard as that expected of you when 'off line'.
- You must ensure you do not bring Weldon Parish Council into disrepute or create any risk to its reputation resultant from the manner in which you use the device(s) issued to you.
- You must ensure that all electronic data transmissions generated on behalf of Weldon Parish Council are only ever stored, transmitted or retrieved on a Council owned device.
- You must immediately return at the request of Weldon Parish Council any electronic communication device issued to you.
- In the event that you are absent from work, for whatever reason other than agreed annual leave, Weldon Parish Council reserves the right to access your emails and voicemail messages in order to ensure Council matters are progressed in accordance with the interests of the Council throughout the duration of the absence.

### **Personal Use of Electronic Communication Devices**

- Personal use of devices issued to you is not permitted.

## **Monitoring Statement, as Required by Legislation**

- In order to legitimately safeguard the Council's interests and ensure acceptable usage and behaviour Weldon Parish Council maintains the right to instruct the Systems Administrators to monitor and report on the usage of electronic communication devices at any time and without prior warning if they have any reason for concern.
- The Council reserves the right to require you to handover devices for scrutiny at any time.

## **Electronic Communication Devices - Unacceptable Usage and/or Behaviour**

**The following are examples of what Weldon Parish Council deem unacceptable usage and/or behaviour:**

- Accessing internet sites that enable gambling of any description or that contain obscene, sexually suggestive, indecent, pornographic, racist, hateful, offensive, bullying or harassing material or; material depicting or inciting violence of any nature or; any otherwise illegal material.
- Distributing, disseminating or storing images, text or materials that are illegal or might be considered obscene, sexually suggestive, indecent, pornographic, racist, hateful, offensive, bullying or harassing material or; that depict or incite violence of any nature.
- Perpetrating any form of fraud or piracy of software, film or music.
- Downloading commercial software or any copyrighted materials belonging to third parties, unless covered or permitted under a commercial agreement or other such licence and you have prior approval from the System Administrator.
- Introducing any form of computer virus into the device.
- Publishing defamatory and/or knowingly false material about Weldon Parish Council and/or our parishioners on social networking sites, 'blogs' (online journals), 'wikis' and any other online publishing format.
- Sending chain letters.
- Unauthorised forwarding of confidential Council messages to external locations.
- Representing personal opinions as those of the Council.
- Accessing copyrighted information in a way that violates the copyright.
- Broadcasting unsolicited personal views in respect of social, political, religious or other non-council related matters.
- Transmitting unsolicited commercial or advertising material, whether for own personal gain or that of third parties.
- Wasting working time on non-Council or non-value adding activities.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive. If you are unsure as to the acceptability of a specific task not noted above should contact the Chair of Weldon Parish Council for clarification before proceeding.

## **Non-Compliance**

Any instances of non-compliance with this Policy may be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary Procedure and may be deemed Gross Misconduct, the penalty for which is Summary Dismissal.

## **Part B – Parish Councillors and/or Parish Clerk/RFO**

Parish Councillors and the Parish Clerk/RFO use their own electronic devices for council business. In order to ensure compliance with the principals of the General Data Protection Regulations and Data Protection Act each councillor is provided with a Weldon Parish Council email address, e.g. joe.bloggs@weldonpc@gmail.com, which is to be used for all council correspondence. It is not permissible to use personal email addresses for council correspondence.

The following key principals apply to all Parish Councillors and Parish Clerk/RFO:

- You must ensure the security of the data contained on your device(s) and utilise strong password protection on each device to deny access to council correspondence by any other person.
- You must ensure your online conduct is of the same professional standard as that expected of you when 'off line'.

You must ensure you do not bring Weldon Parish Council into disrepute or create any risk to its reputation resultant from the manner in which send or respond to emails.

- You must ensure that all electronic data transmissions generated on behalf of Weldon Parish Council are only ever stored, transmitted via your allocated Weldon Parish Council email address.
- In the event that you are absent from office for a prolonged period for whatever reason, Weldon Parish Council reserves the right to access your emails in order to ensure Council matters are progressed in accordance with the interests of the Council throughout the duration of the absence.
- Should you cease to be a councillor all council correspondence must be deleted immediately from your device. It will remain accessible to the Parish Clerk via the Cloud.

## **Part C - Email as a Communication Medium**

Email is a standard means of communicating with customers and internal colleagues and as such the Council expects email messages to be written in a professional business-like manner the same way as all other business communications, e.g. letters, memos, faxes, scanned documents have always been. On the occasions when it is deemed appropriate to send an email please consider the following before composing and sending the message:

- Make sure you set the language on your device to English (UK).
- Be clear as to the objective of the message you want to send.
- Summarise the objective in the subject box so it is clear to the receiver prior to opening the message.
- Ensure you are sending it to the right people, i.e. only those required to react/take action in response to it.
- Compose the message clearly and succinctly as a business communication should be.
- Get the tone right. Be polite at all times, terseness can be misinterpreted. Use humour and irony sparingly, it can be all too easily misinterpreted.
- Don't type in capitals as this is considered to be shouting and is one of the rudest things you can do.
- Don't use 'cc'. The only people who need to receive your email are those required to react/take action in response to it. It is perfectly acceptable for anyone 'cc' on an email to put it at the bottom of their task list or to delete it without reading it.
- Don't set Outlook to automatically request a read receipt. This facility should only be used for the rare occasions when there is a valid business reason for tracking the receipt.
- Don't 'reply to all' if not absolutely necessary.

- Don't reply to an email message when angry, as you may regret it later. Once the message has been sent, you will not be able to recover it.
- Don't mark things as urgent if they aren't, because when you really do have to do an urgent message it may not be treated in the way it deserves.

**Some email housekeeping tips:**

- Create folders in your inbox and file your emails accordingly – this will make it much easier to manage them.
- Don't retain emails in your inbox or sent folder any longer than absolutely necessary, especially those with large attachments. Move them to your deleted folder.
- Empty your deleted and junk folders on a weekly basis.
- Don't post your email address on web sites and other public parts of the Internet as you will be deluged with spam.

This is a non-contractual document that is subject to revision and re-issue in accordance with changing legislation and needs of Weldon Parish Council.

Reviewed and Adopted by Weldon Parish Council on 20th May 2024