

Parish Council IT Policy

1. Introduction and Purpose

West Quantoxhead Parish Council recognises the importance of effective and secure information technology (IT) and email usage in supporting its business, operations, and communications, ensuring compliance with legal obligations, including the General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

This policy outlines clear parameters and responsibilities for the appropriate use of IT resources by:

- Setting expectations for appropriate use of equipment and systems;
- Raising awareness of risks associated with IT use;
- Safeguarding the council's data and digital assets;
- Clarifying what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable use;
- Outlining the consequences of policy breaches.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all councillors, staff and other authorised users, regardless of their working location or pattern, who use West Quantoxhead Parish Council's IT resources, including computers, networks, software, devices, data, and email accounts.

3. Acceptable use of IT resources and email

West Quantoxhead Parish Council IT resources and email accounts are to be used for official council-related activities and tasks. All users must adhere to ethical standards, respect copyright and intellectual property rights, and avoid accessing inappropriate or offensive content.

4. Device and software usage

Where possible, authorised devices, software, and applications will be provided by West Quantoxhead Parish Council for work-related tasks.

Unauthorised installation of software on authorised devices, including personal software, is strictly prohibited due to security concerns.

5. Data management and security

All sensitive and confidential West Quantoxhead Parish Council data should be stored and transmitted securely using approved methods. Regular data backups should be performed to prevent data loss, and secure data destruction methods should be used when necessary.

- Portable computers must be stored safely and securely when not in use.
- All devices (including portable) are to be protected with encryption in case they are lost or stolen, by using strong passwords and locking devices

6. Network and internet usage

West Quantoxhead Parish Council's network and internet connections should be used responsibly and efficiently for official purposes. Downloading and sharing copyrighted material without proper authorisation is prohibited.

7. Email communication

Email accounts provided by West Quantoxhead Parish Council are for official communication only. Emails should be professional and respectful in tone.

Be cautious with attachments and links to avoid phishing and malware. Verify the source before opening any attachments or clicking on links.

8. Password and account security

West Quantoxhead Parish Council users are responsible for maintaining the security of their accounts and passwords. Passwords should be strong and not shared with others. Regular password changes are encouraged to enhance security.

9. Email monitoring

West Quantoxhead Parish Council reserves the right to monitor email communications to ensure compliance with this policy and relevant laws. Monitoring will be conducted in accordance with the Data Protection Act and GDPR.

11. Retention and archiving

Emails should be retained and archived in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements. Regularly review and delete unnecessary emails to maintain an organised inbox, in adherence with document retention policy

12. Reporting security incidents

All suspected security breaches or incidents should be reported immediately to the Clerk for investigation and resolution. Report any email-related security incidents or breaches to the Clerk immediately who will escalate as appropriate.

13. Compliance and consequences

West Quantoxhead Parish Council will adhere to relevant Breach of this IT and Email Policy may result in the suspension of IT privileges and further consequences as deemed appropriate.

14. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Updates may be made to address emerging technology trends and security measures.

15. Contacts

For IT-related enquiries or assistance, users can contact the Clerk.

All staff and councillors are responsible for the safety and security of West Quantoxhead parish council's IT and email systems. By adhering to this IT and Email Policy, West Quantoxhead parish council aims to create a secure and efficient IT environment that supports its mission and goals.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Role: _____