

RAMSBURY & AXFORD PARISH COUNCIL

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & EMAIL POLICY

Introduction

Ramsbury & Axford Parish Council recognises the importance of effective and secure information technology (IT) and email usage in supporting its business, operations, and communications.

This policy outlines the guidelines and responsibilities for the appropriate use of IT resources and email by parish council members, employees, volunteers, and contractors.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Privacy & Data Protection policy.

Scope

This policy applies to all individuals who use the parish council's IT resources, including email accounts, computers, software, devices, and data.

Acceptable use of IT resources and email

The parish council's IT resources and email accounts are to be used for official council related activities and tasks only. All users must adhere to ethical standards, respect copyright and intellectual property rights, and avoid accessing inappropriate or offensive content.

Device software usage

Use of councillors own IT equipment is required to access Parish Council provided email accounts. Operating systems and software on these devices should be kept up to date. The use of firewalls and antivirus software is recommended for all devices used for council email and document review (free versions are available).

Data management and security

All sensitive and confidential Parish Council data should be stored and transmitted securely using approved methods. The Clerk should perform regular data backups to prevent data loss. Secure data destruction methods should be used when necessary.

Documents should not be held on personal devices once they are no longer required. This is particularly important in the case of those containing confidential and /or personal information. At a minimum, documents should be deleted in line with the Document Retention policy.

Email communication

Email accounts provided by the Parish Council are for official communication only. Emails should be professional and respectful in tone. Confidential or sensitive information must not be shared outside the Parish Council.

Be cautious with attachments and links to avoid phishing and malware. Verify the source before opening any attachments or clicking on links. Be mindful that long email chains can contain information which would not normally be shared with some addressees, it may be better to begin a new chain if replying or forwarding to a new addressee, making sure that only the necessary information is included.

Password and account security

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.

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Email monitoring

The 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.

Retention and archiving

Emails should be retained and archived in accordance with the Document Retention policy and any legal and regulatory requirements. Regularly review and delete unnecessary emails to maintain an organised inbox.

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.

Training and awareness

Training and resources to educate users about IT security best practices, privacy concerns and technology updates should be undertaken as required by the Clerk and councillors. A training budget is available for this to be carried out.

Responsibilities

The Clerk and councillors are responsible for the safety and security of the Parish Council's IT and email systems. By adhering to this IT and Email Policy, Ramsbury & Axford Parish Council aims to create a secure and efficient IT environment that supports its mission and goals.

Review Period

This policy will be reviewed every three years from the date of the first adoption and thereafter from the date of the last ratified review by the whole Parish Council, or earlier if there are changes in legislation.