



# GRENDON UNDERWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

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## ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

CP08.03

Authorisation & last review as shown in the Policy Review Record CD08A

CHANGE LOG	
v.1 26 <sup>th</sup> June 2018	Adopted by resolution of full Council at a properly constituted general meeting held 26 <sup>th</sup> June 2018 - minute: 1806.05-1
v.2 26 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	New email & web addresses
v.3 27 <sup>th</sup> May 2025	To mandate auditing for legal monitoring & Data Protection to cross reference CP05- Data Protection Policy & CP06- Document Retention Policy & Employee condition of employment IT Agreement

### I PURPOSE

Electronic mail – email – and documentation in electronic file form are increasingly being used for Council business communications, replacing the traditional forms of communication such as fax and letter. The points outlined below provide guidelines on the access and use of Grendon Underwood Parish Council electronic communications hardware & software systems.

The use of Grendon Underwood Parish Council Internet facilities is a privilege, not a right either of Membership or employment, which may be revoked at any time for misconduct. This Policy establishes the conditions under which access and use of the Council electronic Internet facility is granted.

Grendon Underwood Parish Council recognises that the efficient management of its electronic communications, and the equipment that generates it, is necessary to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations and to contribute to the effective overall management of the Parish Council.

This Policy provides the framework within which Council will effectively manage and conduct its administrative arrangements in relation to the requirements of the relevant legislation such as to ensure the timely and efficient compliance with its obligations and to deliver its duties in regard to the expectations of the residents of the Parish.

It lays out how Councillors and council employees are expected to abide by these requirements.

Council has made every effort to ensure all relevant statutory requirements to which a council is subject are encompassed in this Policy but confirm that, in any event, those requirements apply whether or not they are incorporated herein.

This Policy has been drawn up within the context of the Parish Council's obligations as an employer, its Freedom of Information Policy and its Data Protection Policy and every effort has been made to ensure this Policy is consistent with other Council Policies where relevant.

#### Notes:

- The 'Council' is the Grendon Underwood Parish Council.
- Where the word 'Councillor' or 'Member' is used, unless the context suggests otherwise, the meaning is intended to include those elected and co-opted Councillors, with or without voting rights, authorised, by Council, to access council electronic data, software and hardware for any council authorised, specialist or legal purposes.
- An 'employee' is a properly employed employee of the Council, acting as their employer, in the role of the legally mandated Proper Officer also to act as the Parish Clerk/ Responsible Financial Officer, without voting rights.
- A 'co-opted Member or Councillor' is a person who is not an elected member of the Council but who has been co-opted onto the Council, or a committee or sub-committee properly constituted by Council, by a majority of elected Councillors at a properly constituted meeting of Council and who is entitled to vote on any question that falls to be decided at any meeting of Council or that committee or sub-committee.
- Where the word 'professional expertise' is used, it means any third party authorised by Council to provide expert advice in the use of electronic media.
- A 'meeting' is a properly constituted meeting of the Council, any of its committees, sub-committees, joint committees or joint sub-committees.
- Where gender specific wording is used, meaning is intended to be gender neutral.

**II SCOPE** – applies to all Members, employees and professional expertise having been authorised to access council email accounts, incoming & outgoing, and the council web site.

### **III ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

#### **(a) Email Usage.**

- A Council issued email account is to be used only for Council business and not for any personal purposes.
- All Council business is to be progressed through a Council issued email account only.
- All email transmissions are to be copied to all Councillors and the Clerk.
- Employees are not to encrypt their email messages or change any passwords or access codes unless by the express permission the Chairman of Council.
- Council email is not to be used for illegal or wrongful purposes or to infringe the copyright or other intellectual property rights of third parties or to distribute defamatory, fraudulent or harassing messages. Failure to comply with this will be a disciplinary offence.
- Authorised Members(s) may access, record or disclose any electronic messages or files on an employee's account for any valid legal or business purpose. Employees will not be informed when or if this is to take place.
- Where mandated by statute or for any other legal purpose or by directive of the Chairman, emails and electronic documents relevant to the course of business of the Council should be printed out and filed in the same manner as written correspondence via existing procedures.
- Email accounts are to be used only by those authorised by Council. Users are not to share their account name or password and will be held responsible for all activity on their account.
- Subscription to mailing lists, bulletin boards, chat groups and commercial online services and other information or entertainment services, unless specifically requested by a Councillor, is not allowed.
- The sending and receiving of pornographic material is strictly prohibited. Any member of staff found distributing or downloading such material may face disciplinary procedures.
- The Council recognises the difficulty in preventing outside individuals from sending pornographic material to an employee's business email address. However, if such material is received, due to an individual distributing his or her email address for non-business purposes, or if it is not held secure, then the account holder will be held responsible for all material received to that account.
- If malicious or pornographic material is received to a user's email address, to prevent a user from being held responsible for the receipt of such material, the Chairman of Council is to be contacted in order to exclude receipt of future messages from the offending or similar source.
- Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action, which could lead to dismissal.

#### **(b) Electronic Data**

- All data sent from, received by and held on council equipment and in council accounts remains the property of the council.
- Employees must ensure that all such data is held securely and is backed up periodically according to Council policies and direction.
- It must not be forwarded or copied or passed to any third party without express permission of The Chairman.

#### **(c) Internet Usage / Web Site Policy.**

- Access to the administrative functions of the council web site or other internet access on council equipment or accounts will be limited to authorised personnel only and must be used solely to facilitate the daily running of Council business.
- If non-authorised personnel wish to use the Council Internet facilities, they must request permission from the Chairman of Council, prior to use, and must justify both the desired usage and estimated surfing time.

- Internet facilities are not to be used for accessing dubious websites or for downloading free software unless such software is deemed to be pertinent to the running of systems by the Chairman of Council.
- Any unauthorised or authorised member of staff found viewing, accessing or downloading illicit/pornographic material with face disciplinary procedures.
- Council Internet facilities are not to be used for the retrieval or forwarding of any email messages from non-approved accounts, accessing bulletin boards, chat rooms and discussion groups unless specifically requested by a Councillor and passed by resolution of Council for valid Council business
- Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action, which could lead to dismissal.

**GRENDON UNDERWOOD PARISH COUNCIL.**

ADOPTED