

Kingshurst Parish council

# Use of Council Email/Internet Policy and Procedure

Kingshurst Parish Council Use of Council Email/Internet Policy and Procedure – review 25th February 2022, next review by April 2023

The use of the Internet is now an essential and commonplace tool for most Councillors. Those who use the internet have a responsibility to do so in a professional manner. To assist with this we are issuing the following guidelines which you are asked to read and comply with:

The Council reserves the right to access and monitor any or all areas of any computer and computer software systems which it owns (including email boxes and messages and telephone calls) from time to time for business reasons and training purposes. You should not therefore assume that any information held on the computer is private and confidential to you.

## **Email**

Your Council email address can receive emails from anyone connected to the Internet. Used correctly it is a facility that is of assistance. Inappropriate use however may cause many problems including distractions, distress to others, time wasting and legal claims.

Staff and Councillors should ensure that your correspondents know that they should not send you “humorous” or illegal attachments such as pictures or executable programs. Personal emails should not be received to your **Parish Council email address**. Anyone found with offensive or pornographic material on his or her Council email account or computer will be subject to investigation, which for employees could result in disciplinary action and dismissal for gross misconduct. Councillors will be reported to the monitoring officer.

If you receive an email from an unknown source, or “junk” email you should delete this from your system immediately without opening it as it may contain a virus.

Emails may contain file attachments. These should not be opened unless they are received from a trusted source, i.e. from another known Council, employee or representative. If

Emails to parishioners, contractors and other business contacts should be restricted to Council business. Confidential information about or relating to the business of the Council, its parishioners, contractors or contacts should not be transmitted outside the Council via email unless done so in the course of business. You should ensure there is no infringement of copyright when adding attachments to emails. Confidential information should not be left on display on an unattended device.

### **Guidance for appropriate use**

Email is a non-secure medium and care should be taken when composing, sending and storing messages.

Email should be regarded in the same way as any other business communication and should be treated as a Council record. You should adopt a style and content for email, in particular those sent to external recipients that present a professional image. It is recommended that you adopt the same standards for email as for letters and memos, although the style may be more informal.

Confidential information about or relating to the business of the Council, its customers, prospects, suppliers or contacts should not be transmitted outside the Council via email unless done so in the course of business and sufficient steps are taken to safeguard security.

Everyone must take reasonable steps to guard against unauthorised access to, alteration, accidental loss, disclosure or destruction of data.

### **Inappropriate use**

You must not send internally or externally or obtain material (whether in the form of text or images) which is libellous or defamatory, illegal, obscene, sexually explicit, bullying, discriminatory or disparaging of others particularly in respect of their race, national origins, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious or political beliefs.

You are reminded that material that you find acceptable might be offensive to others. It is recommended that you take care and give sufficient thought to what you send. Messages can be misconstrued and should not become a substitute for "one to one" conversations. You should not send humorous material to anyone. It can frequently be misunderstood or cause offence.

Examples of inappropriate use include, but are not limited to:

1. Sending, receiving, downloading or displaying or disseminating material that insults causes offence or harasses others.
2. Accessing pornographic, racist or other inappropriate or unlawful material.
3. Engaging in on-line chat rooms, on-line gambling sites, social networking sites or blogging.
4. Forwarding electronic chain letters or similar material.
5. Downloading or disseminating copyright materials.
6. Transmitting confidential information about the Council or its parishioners externally and not in the course of the Council's business.
8. Copying or downloading software.

Serious instances of inappropriate use may be considered gross misconduct and lead to investigation or in the case of, dismissal.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_