



# WESTERLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

## COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

**This policy was approved and accepted by Westerleigh Parish Council on June 13<sup>th</sup> 2022**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This policy has been devised so that employees and members of the Parish Council are able to obtain the maximum benefit from communications equipment including email, the internet, social media and mobile phones. It is designed to protect employees and members of the Parish Council and the Council's equipment.
- 1.2 The policy applies to all employees and members of the Parish Council who use Westerleigh Parish Council communications methods and facilities.
- 1.3 The policy reaffirms the Parish Council's general requirements in terms of ensuring that:
  - There is no misuse of Parish Council facilities;
  - Standards of behaviour and language are maintained in internal and external communications;
  - Material that could be considered as racist, sexist or otherwise cause deliberate offence is banned.
- 1.4 It is the responsibility of each person to ensure that they understand and adhere to the principles forming this policy.

### **2. E-mail and the Internet**

- 2.1 The policy states the requirements that apply to the standards to which users are expected to observe in the use of electronic mail and internet facilities provided by the Council.
- 2.2 Misuse of electronic mail and/or internet/social media facilities is a misuse of Parish Council resources, which may lead to action under the disciplinary procedure or code of conduct.
- 2.3 The following must be adhered to:
  - E-mails or Social Media posts must be composed with care. The content and language used in the message must be consistent with best practice;
  - E-mails or Social Media posts containing sexist, racist, derogatory or inappropriate comments which advocate the commission of unlawful acts of violence or discrimination towards other people must not be sent;
  - Aggressive, abusive or offensive language must not be used;
  - Social media posts are to be kept to useful and informative details for residents
  - E-mails must not be sent to more than 50 people simultaneously;
  - Employees and members of the Parish Council must not copy, download or forward material written by anyone else that is potentially libellous or otherwise unlawful.

- Employees and members of the Parish Council must not give out e-mail addresses or other personal information without the express permission of the owner in line with GDPR; bcc should be used for multiple mails to avoid sharing email lists;
- E-mails should not to be sent hastily or in anger;
- Employees and members of the Parish Council are to be aware that external e-mail is not secure and delivery is not guaranteed;
- Unauthorised, illegally copied, or other unofficial software must not be used.
- A Cllr email account/address should not be used in any circumstances after leaving the role

2.4 Unacceptable use or behaviour on the Internet/Social media by employees and members of the Parish Council includes:

- Allowing non-authorised users to access the internet using employees and members of the Parish Council log in or while logged on;
- Visiting internet sites that contain obscene, hateful, pornographic or otherwise illegal material;
- Passing on such material to colleagues or external people;
- Using the computer to perpetrate any form of fraud, or software, film or music piracy;
- Using the internet to send offensive or harassing material to other users;
- Downloading commercial software or any copyrighted materials belonging to third parties, unless this download is covered or permitted under a commercial agreement or other such licence;
- Hacking into unauthorised areas;
- Publishing defamatory and/or knowingly false material about the Council, its employees and members of the Parish Council, members, your colleagues and/or our customers on social networking sites, 'blogs' (online journals), 'wikis' and any online publishing format;
- Undertaking deliberate activities that waste staff effort or networked resources;
- Introducing any form of malicious software into the corporate network;
- Gambling on-line;
- Disclosure of any confidential corporate information without express consent;
- Any other area that the Council reasonably believes may cause them problems.

### **3. Privacy/Security**

- 3.1 Security is essential. Employees and members of the Parish Council may be held personally liable for any misuse by another person.
- 3.2 There is no central log or monitoring of electronic mail. However, in certain circumstances it may be necessary to enter an employee's e-mail account. These circumstances include sudden absences and allegations of serious wrongdoing, or when an employee or member of the Council resigns their position. Emails may also be accessed when collating information for Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests.
- 3.3 If given access to the Shared MS365 Drive, personnel are required to ensure that they do not disclose their passwords to anyone. The Parish Council IT provider will enable access to others accounts (in times of absence etc) as passwords are not held by the Parish Clerk or their Deputy or RFO.
- 3.4 If using the Shared MS365 Drive access to the internet is traceable by the IT provider.

3.5 Login details to the Parish Council website must never be shared outside the Council

#### **4 Mobile Phones**

4.1 Where employees or members of the Parish Council have been provided with a mobile telephone for use in their work, such phones are for business purposes and not for private use. However, if in exceptional circumstances it becomes necessary for an employee to use a council mobile phone for private calls, the cost of the calls may need be reimbursed to the council. (if requested by the RFO on receiving the bill)

#### **5. Mobile Phones and Driving**

5.1 In respect of the law Westerleigh Parish Council forbids employees and members of the Parish Council to use handheld mobile phones whilst driving.

5.2 If an employee needs to stop, s/he must do so in a safe place. Stopping is only permitted on motorway hard shoulders in the event of an emergency. (Receiving or making a mobile call is very rarely an emergency).

5.3 Employees and members of the Parish Council should ensure mobiles are switched off or diverted to voicemail before embarking on a journey in order to minimise distraction.

#### **6. Violation of the Policy**

6.1 Should the Parish Council consider that there has been an unacceptable violation of the policy, it will be dealt with in accordance with the Parish Council's Managing Employee Performance Procedure or Councillor Code of Conduct.