



# Social Media (Staff)

## Policy 16

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### Contents

1. Introduction .....	2
2. Conditions of Acceptable Use .....	2
3. Financial Transactions .....	3
4. Virus Protection .....	3
5. Downloading and Uploading Files .....	3
6. The Use of Email .....	4
7. E-Forums .....	5
8. The Council's Website .....	5

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Three personal computers with internet and email facilities are provided in the Council office. In addition, a laptop with internet facilities is provided, principally for use by Councilors at Council and committee meetings.
- 1.2 This policy will be subject to amendment in response to changing circumstances as facilities develop, whether operational or legislative. Should this occur staff will be advised accordingly.
- 1.3 Compliance with this policy shall be compulsory for all staff.

## 2. Conditions of Acceptable Use

- 2.1 The Council's internet service and email are provided for Council business.

### **The Council reserves the right to monitor internet and email use by employees.**

- Browsing for private, domestic or recreational purposes is permitted during an individual's lunch time or outside of working hours, but this discretionary benefit is subject to the conditions contained in this policy and can be withdrawn at any time.
- Purchasing goods or services for personal use by staff via the internet is not permitted unless prior consent is given by the Clerk. Unauthorised use represents a misuse of the internet facilities provided by the Council and such use may result in disciplinary action being taken.
- The use of social networking/social media via the Council's internet facilities, on sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube is not allowed during working hours and may result in disciplinary action being taken.
- The Council acknowledges that it cannot prevent staff from using social media from their own personal equipment at home and that personal comments will not necessarily pertain to the Council. However, there are certain things that staff should not do when interacting on such sites.
  - Post defamatory, derogatory or offensive comments on the Internet about colleagues, customers, their work or the Council.
  - Reveal confidential information about customers, staff, or the Council.
  - Take and share images relating to the Council for non-professional purposes or post images of staff in uniform or within Council premises without the express permission of the Clerk.
- The Council's internet service and email may not be used for transmitting, retrieving or storing any communications of a discriminatory or harassing nature or materials that are offensive, obscene, pornographic or sexually explicit.
- Staff using the internet must not use or transmit abusive, profane or offensive language on or through the Council's internet or email systems. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action being taken.

- The Council cannot, however, always prevent access to undesirable sites due to the ever changing nature of their design or prevent unsolicited spam emails being received. Therefore, if unsuitable material is accidentally accessed or received, staff must disconnect from that website immediately and advise the Clerk. No action will be taken for genuine accidental access of such material.
- Unsolicited spam emails should simply be deleted and the sender 'blocked'. Filters and anti-spam software will be used to prevent the majority of spam being received.
- Staff must not use the Council's internet facilities to deliberately propagate any virus, worm, Trojan horse or trap-door program code.
- Staff must not knowingly use the Council's internet facilities to disable or overload any computer system or network, or to attempt to disable, defeat or circumvent any system intended to protect the privacy or security of another user, including the Council's firewall.
- Staff must not install additional internet or email related software, or change the configuration of existing software without the authorisation of the Clerk.
- The Clerk will ensure that internet and email controls are adequate, operational and effective.

### **3. Financial Transactions**

- 3.1 Pending the introduction of a Council debit or credit card to enable the ordering of goods or services via the internet, should staff need to order goods over the internet for the Council's use, then staff should first check that the company from which they are ordering can send an invoice to the Council for payment.
- 3.2 All transactions should be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and Standing Orders.

### **4. Virus Protection**

- 4.1 The firewall system is designed to intercept any viruses in email attachments and files downloaded from the internet. Each computer and the laptop has anti-virus software loaded onto them and regular "live updates" should be completed to ensure that the most up-to-date anti-virus software is used.

### **5. Downloading and Uploading Files**

- The Clerk must be advised of any software which is to be downloaded from the internet. Such software must only be for direct business use and arrangements must be made to have such software properly licensed and registered where required. There must be no copyright infringement.
- Staff must not knowingly use the Council's internet facilities to download or distribute pirated software or data.

- Internet facilities must not be used to download entertainment software or games, or to play games against opponents over the internet, or to download images or videos unless there is an explicit business-related use for the material.
- Staff must not upload software or data not owned or licensed to the Council without explicit written authority from the Clerk. Any unauthorised software or data must be scanned before it is uploaded to ensure it is virus free and only uploaded to the approved site and location.
- Staff must not download copy or transmit to third parties the works of others without their permission, as this may infringe copyright.

## 6. The Use of Email

- Communications on the internet should not be considered secure and private. Confidential, personal or other sensitive information must not be transmitted. Staff must not assume privacy for any internet communications of any kind. Emails and/or files can be posted or forwarded to other internet users around the world without a user's knowledge or permission.
- Email messages constitute records of the Council and as such will be monitored and assessed accordingly. Email messages are covered by the Freedom of Information Act and should be kept for a minimum of 3 months, in case they are requested for any reason.
- Email users must never send abusive, sexist, racist or defamatory messages.
- Each employee is responsible for the content of all text, audio or images that they place or send over the Council's internet/email systems. All messages must contain the Council's name and contact details.
- Any messages or information sent by an employee to another person outside the Council via an electronic network (e.g., bulletin board, on-line service, etc.), are statements that reflect on the Council. **All users must include a personal disclaimer in email ("the views expressed are personal and may not necessarily reflect those of Cuckfield Parish Council, unless explicitly stated otherwise")**. Despite this disclaimer there is still, nevertheless, a legal connection to the Council and, therefore, statements may still be construed as representing the Council.
- Data within email is predominantly personal data and as such is subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act and users must ensure they comply with the Council's Data Protection Policy.
- Abuse of email facilities may result in disciplinary action being taken.
- The sending of unwanted messages can constitute harassment and could result in disciplinary action being taken under the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and/or the Council's Bullying and Harassment Policy.

## **7. E-Forums**

- Approved E-Forum users may offer information and advice to others if that is appropriate to their job, or if it represents a reasonable return, in terms of effort involved, for the value they receive from the discussion. Users must not offer help in areas which are the responsibility of someone else within the Council, but may redirect or pass on enquiries to the appropriate person.
- Staff must not participate in discussions which are politically sensitive or controversial, whether nationally or locally, and must not give advice or information which they know to be contrary to the Council's policy or interests.
- Staff are reminded that E-Forums are public forums where they must not reveal any confidential Council or customer information.

## **8. The Council's Website**

- 8.1 The Council's corporate website provides information about all its services.
- 8.2 No member of staff will establish a separate internet or FTP (File Transfer Protocol) site except where this is specifically approved by the Council, and staff will not establish their own home pages using Council hardware or software.
- 8.3 No one, other than the appointed officer or the Clerk, should upload information or files to the Council's website.