East Challow Parish Council IT Policy

1. Introduction

East Challow 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 council members and employees.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals who use East Challow Parish Council's IT resources, including computers, software, devices, data, and email accounts.

3. Acceptable use of IT resources and email

East Challow Parish Council IT resources and email accounts are to be used for official council-related activities and tasks. Limited personal use is permitted, provided it does not interfere with work responsibilities or violate any part of this policy. All users must adhere to ethical standards, respect copyright and intellectual property rights, and avoid accessing inappropriate or offensive content.

4. Device and software usage

Where possible, authorised devices, software, and applications will be provided by East Challow Parish Council for work-related tasks.

Unauthorised installation of software on authorised devices, including personal software, is strictly prohibited to minimise risk of Viruses and malicious software.

All computer and other electronic equipment supplied should be treated with good care at all times. Computer equipment is expensive, and any damage sustained to any equipment will have a financial impact on the Council.

5. Data management and security

All sensitive and confidential East Challow Parish Council data should be stored and transmitted securely using approved methods. Regular data backups should be performed to prevent data loss, and secure data destruction methods should be used when necessary.

Personal information and sensitive data should never be saved on councillors and staff, own devices as this may breach confidentiality agreements, especially if the device is used by other people from time to time.

In the event of councillors or staff leaving the council any council data and emails should be deleted from personal devices.

6. Email communication

Email accounts provided by East Challow Parish Council are for official communication only. Emails should be professional and respectful in tone. Confidential or sensitive information must not be sent via email unless it is encrypted or password protected.

Be cautious with attachments and links to avoid phishing and malware. Verify the source before opening any attachments or clicking on links.

7. Password and account security

East Challow Parish Council users are responsible for maintaining the security of their accounts and passwords. Passwords should be strong and not shared with others. National Cyber security Centre recommend using 3 random words. Regular password changes are encouraged to enhance security.

Passwords should be changed if compromise is suspected.

8. Mobile devices and remote Work

Mobile devices provided by East Challow Parish Council should be secured with pin codes and/or biometric authentication. When working remotely, users should follow the same security practices as if they were in the office.

Ensure secure WiFi networks are always used.

9. Email and IT equipment monitoring

East Challow Parish Council reserves the right to monitor email communications and the use of IT equipment; any monitoring must be proportionate and comply with relevant data protection and privacy laws. Monitoring will be conducted in accordance with the Data Protection Act and GDPR

The council may, at any time, withdraw email access, should it feel that this is no longer necessary for the role or that the system is being abused.

10. Social Media

To protect both the council and its interests, everyone is required to comply with the following rules about social media, whether in relation to their council role or personal social networking sites, and irrespective of whether this is during or after working hours:

Any blog that mentions the council, its current work, councillors, employees, other users associated with the council, partner organisations, local groups, suppliers, parishioners, should identify the author as one of its councillors or employees and state that the views expressed on the blog or website are theirs alone and do not represent the views of East Challow Parish Council. Even if the council is not mentioned, care should be taken with any views expressed on social media sites and any views should clearly be stated to be the writer's own (e.g. via a disclaimer statement such as: "The comments and other content on this site are my own and do not represent the positions or opinions of my employer/ the council.") Writers must not claim or give the impression that they are speaking on behalf of the council.

Comments posted by councillors, staff, and other authorised users on any sites should be knowledgeable, accurate and professional and should not compromise the council in any way.

Councillors and staff who have left the council must not post any inappropriate comments about the council or its councillors and staff on LinkedIn, Facebook, X.com or any other social media/networking sites.

11. Retention and archiving

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

12. 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.

13 Training and awareness

East Challow Parish Council will provide reminders to users about IT and email security best practices, privacy concerns, and technology updates.

14. Compliance and consequences

Breach of this IT and Email Policy may result in the suspension of IT privileges and further consequences as deemed appropriate.

15. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Updates may be made to address emerging technology trends and security measures.

16. Contacts

For IT-related enquiries or assistance, users can contact the Clerk.

All staff and councillors are responsible for the safety and security of East Challow Parish Council's IT and email systems. By adhering to this IT and Email Policy, East Challow Parish Council aims to create a secure and efficient IT environment that supports its mission and goals.