



WEST DEAN PARISH COUNCIL

EMAIL ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

INTRODUCTION

West Dean Parish Council encourages the use of email where it supports the aims and objectives of the Council. It is essential that when emailing as a Council member or employee (user) that content complies with current legislation and relevant to Council's policies and procedures and does not create unnecessary business risk for the Council.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Email is a business communication tool and users are obliged to use email in a responsible, effective and lawful manner. Although, by its nature email seems to be less formal than other written communication, the same law applies.

The Council therefore recognises that there are risks associated with the use of email and the extensive damage that can be caused by:

- Sending or forwarding emails, including an attachment, with any libellous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks.
- Unlawfully forwarding any confidential information.
- Unlawfully forwarding or copying messages without permission.
- Sending or forwarding and attachment that contains a virus.

This policy aims to ensure appropriate use of email and to help mitigate the following risks:

- Harm to individuals.
- Damage to Councils reputation.
- Potential legal action and/or fines against Council or individuals.
- Potential information data breaches.

If any user disregards the rules set out in this policy the user will be fully liable and the Council will disassociate itself from the user as far as legally possible.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all members and employees of West Dean Parish Council.

EMAIL ACCOUNT

The Council will allocate all employees and members an email account for use for Council business only. Officers will rely to any email from a personal account back to the WDPC email address. Any account used for Parish Council business and correspondence will be subject to any request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 so Councillors should use WDPC emails to save their personal emails being investigated. Councillors are also responsible for ensuring the security of devices, apps and packages used for Parish Council activities and all devices should be password protected.

EMAIL CONTENT

Email messages may be disclosed under the General Data Protection Regulation, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, or in legal proceedings in the same way as paper documents. Deletion from a user's inbox or archives does not mean that an email cannot be recovered; email messages should be treated as potentially retrievable, by specialist software.

Users should take care with the content of email messages, as incorrect or improper statements can give rise to claims for discrimination, harassment, defamation, breach of confidentiality or breach of contract. Users should assume that email messages may be read by others and not include anything that would offend or embarrass any reader, or themselves, if it found its way into the public domain.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The following rules are required by law and are to be strictly adhered to:

- It is strictly prohibited to send or forward emails containing libellous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks. If an email of this nature is received, promptly notify the Clerk.
- Do not forward a message or attachment without acquiring permission from the sender first (This applies to mail received from a third party being forwarded to another third party. Mail received by a Council employee is the property of the Council and can therefore be circulated within Council.)
- Do not send unsolicited email messages whereby you would be invading someone's privacy.
- Do not forge or attempt to forge email messages.
- Do not send email messages using another person's email account.
- Do not send a copy of a message or attachment belonging to another user without permission of the originator.
- Do not disguise or attempt to disguise your identity when sending email.

DATA PROTECTION ISSUES

Personal data is subject to the General Data Protection Regulation, under the terms of the Regulation personal data includes any information about a living identifiable individual, including their name, address, phone number, email address and other information about the individual. If such information is included in an email or an attachment to an email, a user is deemed to be 'processing' personal data and must abide by the law. In particular, a user must not collect such information without the individual knowing what the user's proposes to do with such information. Such information may not be disclosed or amended except in accordance with the purpose for which the information was collected. The user must ensure the information is accurate and up to date. In addition, the individual has the right to inspect what is held about them on the email system or held in separate archives of emails. The individual can demand correction of inaccurate information, can request blocking or erasure of damaging information, and can sue for damage caused by inaccurate information.

The law also imposes rules on storing of personal data. Such data should be kept only for as long as it is needed for the purpose for which it was collected. If a user maintains their own stores of emails, they should ensure that such stores are not maintained for longer than is necessary for the purpose for which they were collected. Emails should be held in such a way that they can be easily identified, reviewed and when necessary, destroyed.

Best Practices

The Council considers email as an important means of communication and recognises the importance of proper email content and speedy replies in conveying a professional image and delivering good customer service.

Therefore, the Council wishes users to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Write well-structured emails and use short descriptive subjects.
- The Council's email style is informal. This means that sentences can be short and to the point. You can start your email with 'Hi' or 'Dear', and the name of the person. Messages can end with 'Best Regards'.
- Signatures must include your name, job title and Council name. Signatures are not necessary for internal emails. A disclaimer should be added underneath your signature for external emails. (see Disclaimer)
- Use the spell checker before you send out an email.
- Do not send unnecessary attachments.
- If you forward emails, clearly state what action you expect the recipient to take.
- If you are sharing group emails, externally or internally, use the 'Blind carbon copy (Bcc)' function so as not to disclose personal email address information and ensure that any addresses within the text of the email are also removed.
- Only send emails of which the content could be displayed on a public noticeboard. If they cannot be displayed publicly in their current state, consider rephrasing the email, using other means of communication, or protecting information by using a password.
- Only mark emails as important if they are really important.

Replying to emails:

- Emails should be answered within the same time scale afforded to other forms of communication.

Disclaimer

The following disclaimer should be added to each outgoing email:

This email may contain privileged and/or confidential information or attachments. If you receive this in error, please notify the sender immediately and do not use, rely upon, copy, forward or disclose its contents to any other party, please delete the message. Any views or opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of West Dean Parish Council. It is the responsibility of recipient to ensure that this email and any attachments are free from viruses before using it. No responsibility whatsoever is accepted by West Dean Parish Council for any loss or damage arising in any way from its use.

West Dean Parish Council manages personal data under the DP Act 1998 and GDPR 2018. As a public body, the Council may be required to disclose the contents of emails (or any response to it) under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, unless the information in it is covered by one of the exemptions in the Act.

Please do not print this email unless it is absolutely necessary. Every time you don't print an email, you are helping the environment.

Email Monitoring

There must be no expectation of privacy in anything you create, store, send or receive with a Councils email account. Your emails can be monitored without prior notification if deemed necessary.

Appendix

To ensure compliance with this policy the following suggested actions will need to be taken to protect your computer:

- Ensure operating system is updated when required, this is normally something that will pop up on your computer when updates are available.
- Ensure that browser pop-ups are dis-allowed/disabled.
- Run an Ad Blocker, this needs to be kept up to date.
- Run a virus checker, which also needs to be kept up to date.
- Password protect your PC, laptop or tablet
- If you have a joint machine please that you also password protect your WDPC email account so that only you have access
- Add an email signature to your account, see instructions below

Instructions for email signatures –

1. Open you email account
2. Go to settings
3. Go to general and signature
4. Click on signature and then add your details i.e.

Cllr Frank Spencer,

West Dean Parish Council,

Telephone: 01594 564484

Website: www.westdeanpc.org.uk

5. Add the following disclaimer below your signature :-

This email may contain privileged and/or confidential information or attachments. If you receive this in error, please notify the sender immediately and do not use, rely upon, copy, forward or disclose its contents to any other party, please delete the message. Any views or opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of West Dean Parish Council. It is the responsibility of recipient to ensure that this email and any attachments are free from viruses before using it. No responsibility whatsoever is accepted by West Dean Parish Council for any loss or damage arising in any way from its use.

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Outlook

Open a new email

Click the down arrow by Signature and click signatures, this will open a box where you can add a new signature based on the information above, please follow the instructions for a new signature