



TELSCOMBE TOWN COUNCIL

Email, Internet & Social Media Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 The Council recognises that email and internet are important information and communication platforms which are regularly used during the course of Council business. This policy provides guidance to help protect users and the Council.

1.2 This policy applies to all staff members and Councillors.

2.0 Internet usage

2.1 Staff members and Councillors are encouraged to use the internet responsibly as part of their official and professional activities.

2.2 Information obtained via the internet and published in the name of the Council must be relevant, accurate and professional. A disclaimer must be stated where personal views are expressed.

2.3 The use of the internet or email facilities to access or distribute any kind of offensive materials will not be tolerated by the Council and staff/Councillors may be subject to further action being undertaken.

2.4 The equipment, services and technology used to access the internet in the Civic Centre are the property of the Council. The Council reserves the right to monitor internet traffic and access data that is composed, sent or received through any of its communication connections.

3.0 Unacceptable use of the internet

3.1 Unacceptable use of the internet by staff or Councillors includes, but is not limited to:

- sending or posting discriminatory, harassing or threatening messages or images,
- using computers to perpetuate any form of fraud and or software, film/music piracy,
- obtaining, using or disclosing Council passwords without authorisation,
- sharing confidential material or proprietary information outside of the Council,
- hacking into unauthorised websites,
- sending or posting information that is defamatory to the Council, its services, Councillors or members of the public.
- Introducing malicious software onto Council computers and/or jeopardising the security of the Council's electronic communications systems.
- Sending or posting chain letters, solicitations or advertisements that are not related to the Council's business or activities.
- Passing off personal views as those representing the Council.

3.2 If a member of staff or Councillor is unsure about what constitutes acceptable internet usage, then he/she should ask the Clerk for further guidance and clarification.

4. Email

4.1 Email should be regarded as written paper documents for the purposes of production, use, retention and disclosure and can be called upon under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Personal information should be kept in accordance with the principles established in the Data Protection Act 1998.

4.2 The Council reserves the right to open any email file stored on the Council's computer system.

4.3 The following guidelines for email use should be observed by all members of staff and Councillors:

- use appropriate language to avoid unintentional misunderstandings.
- Respect the confidentiality of information contained within emails, even if encountered inadvertently.
- Check with the sender if there is any doubt regarding the authenticity of a message.
- Do not open any attachment unless certain of the authenticity of the sender.
- Only copy emails to others where appropriate and necessary.
- Emails which create obligations or give instructions on behalf of the Council must be sent by officers only and not Councillors.
- Emails must comply with common codes of courtesy, decency and privacy.

5.0 Reporting and Sanctions

5.1 If anyone receives an email from a staff member which they believe is contrary to the guidance provided in this policy, it should be reported to the Clerk who will investigate and if required will use the Council's formal disciplinary procedure.

5.2 If anyone receives an email from a Councillor which they believe is contrary to the guidance provided in this policy, then this should be reported to the Clerk following the grievance policy or should be reported to the Monitoring Officer at Lewes District Council.

6.0 Security

6.1 Only software purchased by the Council can be installed on to the Council's computer systems. Software licenses shall be retained.