

# Information Technology Policy

## Adopted by Whittingham Parish Council

### 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2025

As more and more information becomes available at the press of a button, it is vital that all information is treated sensitively and securely.

Councillors are expected to maintain an awareness of the confidentiality of information that they have access to and they **must not share confidential information or passwords with anyone**.

Failure to properly observe confidentiality may be seen as a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct and will be dealt with through its prescribed procedures.

Whittingham Parish Council has a **Privacy Policy** which details the type of information stored and processed. This **Information Technology Policy** details how information is accessed and stored.

Whittingham Parish Council does not have any Council owned computers. All information is accessed and stored on personal devices. Consequently, Members are required to confirm annually that

- **any electronic device, used for receiving or sending Council correspondence, is password protected.**

Passwords should not be written down and the use of autofill boxes is not recommended, particularly if an electronic device is shared with others. Log in passwords should be updated regularly.

- **The Clerk should be informed if a device is lost or a password has been breached.**

Communications on behalf of the Council will usually come from the Clerk who has a dedicated Council owned email address [clerk@whittinghamparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:clerk@whittinghamparishcouncil.org.uk)

The email account is provided by the website provider and is stored on a remote server accessed over the internet rather than on a physical device. Providing security checks are met - the email account and contents can be accessed by a member of the Council or a new Clerk. This ensures correspondence remains secure and accessible should the Clerk leave the Council or become incapacitated. Council documents are also stored electronically and can be accessed through Microsoft 365.

Emails are checked, mainly during office hours and the Clerk aims to acknowledge correspondence within 2 working days. An 'out of office' message is used when appropriate, although the Clerk may still access emails to ensure urgent matters are attended to.

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with emails received, forwarding any relevant mail to Councillors or external agencies for information and / or action. Care should be taken to only 'cc' essential recipients. The use of the 'Reply All' option should be avoided. Care should also be taken to ensure that previous email trails are removed - unless they provide context to the message.

**Emails sent to the Clerk or Councillors should be treated as official Council business and may be accessed under the Freedom of Information Act.**

Councillors are provided with council-owned email addresses, which they are strongly advised to use to ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept. If a Councillor leaves the authority, the email box will be deleted, restricting incidents of inappropriate use.

Personal information should not be forwarded on to other people or groups outside of the Council, this includes name, address and email details. Where necessary, a data consent form should be completed before personal data is forwarded.

- **Members are requested to note that correspondence and personal contact details should not be forwarded without consent and must be deleted once a matter is completed.**

**END**