

# IT & EMAIL POLICY

## 1. Introduction

Old Basing & Lychpit Parish Council (“the Council”) has engaged with external suppliers to provide equipment, systems and support to ensure the IT needs of its staff and Councillors are met.

## 2. Scope of document

The Council makes use of IT systems for data storage, communications and as a source of information. This policy is intended to:

- reduce barriers to Councillor engagement and communication.
- prevent inappropriate use of computer equipment (such as extended personal use or for accessing and circulating pornographic, racist, sexist or defamatory material that may cause harm to individuals or organisations).
- protect confidential, personal or commercially sensitive data.
- protect the Council from the risk of financial loss, loss of reputation or libel.
- prevent the introduction of viruses.
- prevent the use of unlicensed software.
- ensure that Council property is properly looked after.
- monitor the use of computer facilities to ensure compliance with internal policies and rules and to detect abuse.

## 3. Principles of use of Parish Council issued devices

**All hardware and software issued to Councillors remains the property of Old Basing & Lychpit Parish Council.**

When using such equipment:

- 3.1. The device should be operated in accordance with the Council’s policies and procedures, and every effort should be made to protect both hardware and software from misuse/damage.
- 3.2. Passwords/PINS or other authentication credentials should not be disclosed to anyone else. Any access issues should be reported to the Parish Clerk. Passwords/PINS or other authentication credentials should be changed immediately if you believe they may have been compromised.
- 3.3. Your device will be insured by the Council against loss or damage within the UK, with the expectation that you will take measures to ensure the safety and security of the device. Any loss or damage must be reported immediately to the Clerk. If taken outside of the UK, you must ensure the device is covered by your own insurance policy.
- 3.4. Council-issued devices and email accounts must use secure authentication, including multi-factor authentication where available. Passwords should be changed periodically and not reused.
- 3.5. Any software defects or malfunctions should be brought to the attention of the Parish Clerk.
- 3.6. Only you are authorised to use the device, it should not be loaned to family members or friends.

- 3.7. If you choose to download an app, please use a personal device/account. Any apps downloaded to Council-owned devices should be appropriate and in line with this Policy.
- 3.8. Your device should be returned to the council upon request, or when you are no longer a member of staff/Councillor.
- 3.9. Access to Old Basing & Lychpit Parish Council accounts will cease when you are no longer a member of staff/Councillor.

## 4. Breach of this Policy

Breach of this policy will be regarded as an offence and may be reported to the Full Council for consideration of further action required. Anyone who considers that there has been a breach of this policy in relation to personal information about them held by the Council should raise the matter via the Council's formal grievance procedure.

## 5. Access to software for Council business

- 5.1. You should never solicit, download inappropriate material from the internet or email, nor use it for online gambling, transmitting pornography, copyright information and/or software material, posting confidential items including council business, other Councillors, council staff or members of the public.
- 5.2. If you are using your own device to connect with your Parish Council account or to transfer data between the laptop/PC and any of the Council's computers you must ensure that you have obtained prior consent, comply with instructions and ensure that any data downloaded or uploaded is free from viruses.
- 5.3. In some instances, remote monitoring of website/emails may occur, but only in extreme circumstances of suspicious or illegal behaviour. This may only be carried out under the supervision of the Clerk and will follow data protection legislation.

## 6. Email Use

Councillors are provided with an email account 'yourname@oldbasing.gov.uk' specifically for their work as Parish Councillors. The Council believes this is the most efficient and effective way of working together and keeping in touch with the community, but before Councillors can make use of this facility, they need to note the following:

- 6.1. Firstly, and most importantly, this email account must not be used to make decisions or influence decisions that should be made at a meeting of the Council. Standing Orders and the Code of Conduct are clear on the rules of debate and Councillors should check them if they are in any doubt.
- 6.2. The law does not allow Councillors to act independently, and every Councillor should make sure they do not imply that the content of their emails (whether gov.uk or private email) represents the opinion or policy of the Council as a whole. As an individual, a Councillor can think, say, and write what he/she likes, but as a Councillor only the view of the whole Council can be given, whether the Councillor agrees with the decision or not.
- 6.3. When a Councillor uses the Parish Council account to send an email, the recipient can be excused for thinking it is an 'official' communication sent on behalf of the Council. All Councillors should be particularly careful if they agree to do something that may be seen as a commitment by the Parish Council, so Councillors must put the Disclaimer at the bottom **of every email**.
- 6.4. Neither private nor Parish Council emails are confidential; every email is stored in the archive and is available to the public through a Freedom of Information request. Although emails will be cleared of any personal data before they are released, it is better to avoid disclosing anything personal or confidential in the first place; email is

not a secure medium.

- 6.5. No disclaimer will help if a Councillor sends an email that contains illegal, offensive, obscene, racist, abusive material or libelous, defamatory, or discriminative material which may bring the Council into disrepute.
- 6.6. The only people who can send an official email are the Clerk or Assistant Clerk who write on behalf of the Councillors to give the Council's views. The Chair and Vice Chair are copied into emails regarding issues from or to parishioners and the issue or responses are discussed beforehand with the Chair and/or Vice Chair if required. The Chair and Vice Chair are copied into other important emails as required.
- 6.7. If important issues are raised by parishioners or other bodies, after discussion with the Chair and/or Vice Chair the Clerk or Assistant Clerk will forward the email to all Councillors for information but not discussion, as this could be considered pre-determination.
- 6.8. At the request of the Clerk/Assistant Clerk and with the agreement of the Chair/Vice Chair, in exceptional situations it may be appropriate for a Parish Councillor to issue correspondence in his/her own name. Such correspondence must make it clear that it has been written in an official capacity and has been authorised.

## **7. Terms and conditions for the use of oldbasing.gov.uk domains and use of private email addresses for Council business**

By using the Parish Council's email address or a private email address for Parish Council business, a Councillor is agreeing that they understand the following Terms & Conditions and that they will abide by them:

- 7.1 Whereas Old Basing & Lychpit Parish Council (the "Council") is the licensee of the domain oldbasing.gov.uk (the "domain") it authorises its Councillors and Officers to hold and use email accounts within the domain. The account holders agree that the Council is a legal entity in its own right and separate from any of its Councillors.
- 7.2 Account holders within the domain consent to receive Summons and Notices of Meetings by electronic means.
- 7.3 The number of email accounts may be amended from time to time as required.
- 7.4 The names of any email accounts shall have no meaning or context beyond that of being a device to identify and differentiate the account holders within the Council's Domain.
- 7.5 The Council shall be held harmless from any claims made or views expressed or any other content within an email distributed from the domain by its Councillors through the inclusion of a footnote Disclaimer, the wording of which has been determined by the Clerk and included here. The Disclaimer should be appended to all outgoing emails, whether from a Parish Council account or from a personal account used for Parish Council business.
- 7.6 A Councillor should not include the words "Old Basing & Lychpit Parish Council" in their signature without their Parish Councillor title, as this may imply to the reader that the email has been authored by the Council itself.
- 7.7 A Councillor may not use the words "on behalf of" or "for" in front of the words "Old Basing & Lychpit Parish Council" or otherwise give any impression that they are representing the Council as part of their email signature without the express permission of the Clerk or Assistant Clerk.
- 7.8 An email may be signed by the Council itself by using only the words "Old Basing & Lychpit Parish Council". Any such email must be both sent from the Clerk's account

clerk@oldbasing.gov.uk and be authored by the Clerk (or sent from the Assistant Clerk's account [assistant.clerk@oldbasing.gov.uk](mailto:assistant.clerk@oldbasing.gov.uk) and be authored by the Assistant Clerk).

- 7.9 An email may be signed by the Clerk or Assistant Clerk by using their name, title, and the words "Old Basing & Lychpit Parish Council". An email authored by the Clerk or Assistant Clerk shall be the same as if it had been authored by the Council itself.
- 7.10 All outgoing emails from the domain regardless of the author shall observe relevant data protection legislation (Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR and any successor or amending legislation including the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025) and, where there are multiple private addressees who have no association, such emails shall be distributed by blind copy only.
- 7.11 Emails relating to Council business form part of the official record and shall be retained, archived, or deleted in accordance with the Council's Document Retention Policy.
- 7.12 Councillors may use the Council's email accounts for council business only.
- 7.13 The following disclaimer wording should be included at the foot of all emails sent from an @oldbasing.gov.uk email address:

Disclaimer: This email may contain privileged and/or confidential information. If you receive this in error, please notify the sender immediately and do not use or disclose its content to any other party. Any views or opinions expressed are those of the author and do not represent those of Old Basing & Lychpit Parish Council. Old Basing & Lychpit Parish Council is committed to safeguarding your personal data and complying with the rights of individuals under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The Old Basing & Lychpit PC Privacy Notice and other GDPR policies and documents can be accessed on the website [www.oldbasing.gov.uk](http://www.oldbasing.gov.uk)

## 8. Good practices

- 8.1 Before sending an email message, consider if it may be more effective to communicate face to face or by telephone. It is easy to misconstrue the contents of an email which can lead to confusion and poor communication, whilst a quick telephone conversation can prevent extensive email "ping-pong" conversations clarifying an email's meaning.
- 8.2 Users should not send or forward any chain emails (e.g. jokes or virus warnings) from their Council email account as these can contain malware. In addition, most virus warnings and supposed 'police' warnings circulating via email are hoaxes designed to clog up email systems by scaring people into forwarding them across the internet.
- 8.3 Remember that the authenticity of any email received cannot be guaranteed, especially with the prevalence of email "spoofing" (emails pretending to come from a source gathered through dubious means). Users should always avoid opening any attachments to emails that are unexpected.
- 8.4 When sending an email, users should only "cc" and "bcc" people who really need to be informed. Users should take care when using the "Reply to All" function as this may be inappropriate, especially when the user has been the blind recipient.
- 8.5 Email etiquette construes capitalisation as SHOUTING, so it's best to avoid inappropriate use of upper case in messages.