

Funtington

Parish Council

Email Policy

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In the case of hard copies of this policy the content can only be assured to be accurate on the date of issue marked on the document.	
For assurance that the most up to date policy is being used, staff should refer to the version held on the Funtington website www.funtingtonpc.org	

1. INTRODUCTION

This document describes Funtington Parish Council's policy for email etiquette. It is based on industry best practice and guidance and must be followed by all Funtington Parish Council Staff and Councillors.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the policy are to ensure that the services made available to Councillors and employees are used:

- In accordance with the values, principles and standards of the Council;
- To ensure GDPR compliance through the use of approved email accounts; and
- So as not to threaten the integrity of the Council's IT services or incur legal liability.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all councillors and employees who have access to Council email facilities

4. USING EMAIL

Email can be used for a variety of reasons, from arranging refreshments for a meeting to communicating a formal business decision.

When is email a good way to get a message across?

- You need to get in touch with a person who is hard to reach via telephone;
- The information you want to share is not time sensitive;
- You need to send someone an electronic file e.g. a document for discussion;
- You need to distribute information to a large number of people quickly; or
- A written record of a communication is needed.

When is an email not a good form of communication?

- Your message is long and complicated and requires additional discussion that would be best accomplished face-to-face;
- Your message is emotionally charged or the tone of your message could easily be misconstrued. If you would hesitate to say something face-to-face do not write it in an email; or
- The information is confidential. Email is never confidential. Keep in mind your message could be forwarded to other people without your knowledge.

5. WRITING EMAILS

Email is not a secure method of transmission - it should not be assumed that any email communication is secure or private. Users should take this into account particularly when emailing confidential or sensitive information.

When writing an email it is important to compose the message with the same care and clarity you would apply to letters and memos, as emails form part of the corporate record under the General Data Protection Regulations and Freedom of Information Act;

- a. Always complete the Subject Line with a clear description of what the email is about. This will help recipients distinguish between what they need to look at immediately and what can wait;
- b. Always ensure that your recipient list is appropriate Is there a need for everyone to see your reply / do you really want everyone to see your reply?;
- c. Always add a salutation - missing one out can appear rude;
- d. Don't be a novelist when composing an email; keep it simple, unambiguous and to the point;
- e. Never write your email or the subject matter in CAPITAL LETTERS. This implies shouting;
- f. Avoid using abbreviations and emoticons. Not everyone may know the meaning of informal expressions, such as FWIW (for what it's worth);
- g. Don't mark things as having 'high importance' if that is not the case, otherwise truly 'important' messages may not be given the appropriate attention;
- h. Be polite. Terseness can be misinterpreted. Please and thank you go a long way;
- i. Never reply in anger: take a break or 'sleep on it' before sending;
- j. Don't conduct an argument on email - it is unprofessional;
- k. Never 'flame' anyone. (A flame is an electronic verbal attack);
- l. Proof read every message; mistakes do not go unnoticed by recipients
- m. Add the recipient's email last; this prevents inadvertently pressing the 'send button' before the message is really ready to be sent; and
- n. Remember: emails sent externally represent and reflect upon the Council.

6. SECURITY

Access to Councillors' email accounts is restricted to individual users and MUST not be shared accounts;

- a. The access of each user is controlled by means of their own password;
- b. Passwords must be kept confidential and not disclosed to others; disclosure could result in email misuse being attributed to the owner of the password;
- c. Breaches of security e.g. disclosure of personal passwords, giving unauthorised access to emails to external parties, may result in action from the Information Commissioners Office (ICO);

- d. If you suspect there has been data breach or your email/IT has been hacked you must inform the Parish Clerk immediately. The Parish Clerk will then decide the most appropriate way to deal with the breach; and
- e. Time should be set aside on a regular basis for “housekeeping”, in order to delete old or unwanted items from mailboxes. This is essential in order to ensure the efficient operation of email systems, helps to keep mailboxes organised and ensure compliance with the Council’s Document Retention Policy.

7. Breach of Policy and Standards

Any member who knowingly or recklessly contravenes any instruction contained in this policy may, depending on the circumstances of the case, be subject to disciplinary action, which could include dismissal from office.