



# Awbridge Parish Council IT Policy

## 1 Introduction

Awbridge Parish Council recognises the importance of effective and secure information technology (IT) and email usage in supporting its business, operations, and communications.

This policy outlines the guidelines and responsibilities for the appropriate use of IT resources and email by council members, employees, volunteers, and contractors

## 2 Scope

This IT policy applies to all individuals using IT equipment and resources for purposes Parish business regardless of whether it is council owned or personal device.

For clarity individuals include:

- Elected Councillors,
- Clerk,
- Contractors,
- Volunteers.

## 3 Email Use

All parish electronic correspondence must use the generic email domain Awbridge.org.uk.

The use of other domains, i.e. Gmail, Outlook etc are prohibited.

*Hampshire ALC Key Topic Note – Use of Personal Email Addresses Hampshire ALC strongly recommend councillors and employees use an email address provided to them by their council when carrying out council business. This not only protects the council, but it also protects the member and or employee as an individual. Using a dedicated council provided email address ensures any data contained within it remains the property of the council. All smaller authorities, including parish meetings, need to consider their obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018. In terms of UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), the council is seen as the data controller, and therefore the council has obligations relating to the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of all personal data it holds. This means that the council is accountable for any business the council conducts involving personal data on any device or through an email account. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) have produced a useful guide to the General Data Protection Regulations. The use of personal devices or email addresses raises the risk that personal data is processed for a different purpose to that originally intended when the data was collected. Inevitably, councillors and employees will collect personal data during their term of office or employment. Everyone has a responsibility to ensure they only use personal data for the purposes for which the council obtained it and in accordance with the council's own policies. If copies of data are stored on several devices and/or email accounts there is an increased risk that it will become out of date or inaccurate over time, or that it is retained for longer than necessary. It would also be difficult for the council to control where the data ends up, thereby increasing the risk of a data breach. In the event of a personal data breach, the council must be able to demonstrate that they've secured, controlled, or deleted all personal data on a particular device, which is difficult to do if council members are using email accounts that are*

Adopted by the Parish Council at September 2025 meeting



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*either not provided by the council, or in addition to their council provided email account. The council should also be aware that under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the council are obliged to formally respond to any request for information the council holds. This information includes information held in personal email accounts that are being used for council business. By using a council provided email address to conduct council business, the council can more easily access information held to meet their obligations under the legislation. Should the ICO receive a complaint regarding information provided by the council, any investigation would then also be limited to official council email addresses without the need to interrogate personal email accounts. With a council dedicated email address, when a councillor resigns from their seat, or fails to be re-elected, the council can ensure that all data within that member's email account can either be deleted or forwarded within the council to another member or employee, and the Member Services Team Page 2 of 2 Hampshire ALC Key Topic Note – Use of Personal Email Addresses (July 2025) This document is owned by Hampshire ALC and may be provided to other County Associations account closed down, ensuring any data within remains with the council and any risk of a potential data breach minimised.*

### **4 Acceptable Use of IT Resources**

Parish council IT resources, where provided, are to be used for official council-related activities and tasks. All users must adhere to ethical standards, respect copyright and intellectual property rights, and avoid accessing inappropriate or offensive content.

### **5 Device And Software Usage**

Where possible, authorised devices, software, and applications will be provided by the parish council for work-related tasks.

Unauthorised installation of software on authorised devices, including personal software, is strictly prohibited due to security concerns.

### **6 Data Protection**

When using parish accounts and devices all users must be aware and consider the requirements of the parish Data Protection policy. It is strictly forbidden to store any personal data on devices that are not authorised and owned by the parish.

### **7 Password and Account Security**

Parish council users are responsible for maintaining the security of their accounts and passwords. Passwords should be strong and not shared with others. Regular password changes are encouraged to enhance security.

### **8 Cybersecurity**

All parish authorised and owned devices must have security software installed for protection.



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All users accessing emails on behalf of the parish must be aware at all times of the potential of suspicious emails and content within. If in any doubt that an email is potentially a phishing or scam it should not be opened and deleted immediately.

The parish Clerk must be informed of the incident who can notify all Councillors of the suspicious email in case others have received the same. If upon checking their accounts Councillors identify the same email is present these must be deleted.

### **9 Website Accessibility**

It is an important requirement that the parish council has an up to date website to publish information such as meeting minutes, AGAR, policies etc. In doing so the parish must ensure that the website complies with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, currently WCAG 2.2

### **10 Awareness and Review**

It is the responsibility of all elected councillors and the clerk to ensure they are aware of this IT Policy and its application. The policy must be reviewed on an annual basis and approved at a scheduled parish council meeting.

### **11 Contacts**

For council IT-related enquiries or assistance, users can contact in the first instance, Tracy Sansome (Clerk and RFO to Awbridge PC)