Bowes Parish Council

IT Policy

1. Introduction

Bowes 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, and contractors.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals who use Bowes Parish Council's IT resources, including computers, software, devices, data, and email accounts.

3. Acceptable use of IT resources and email

Bowes Parish Council IT resources and email accounts are to be used for official council-related activities and tasks. Limited personal use is permitted, provided it does not interfere with work responsibilities or violate any part of this policy. All users must adhere to ethical standards, respect copyright, and intellectual property rights, and avoid accessing inappropriate or offensive content.

4. Device and software usage

Where possible, authorised devices, software, and applications will be provided by Bowes Parish Council for work-related tasks.

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

5. Data management and security

All sensitive and confidential Bowes Parish Council data should be stored and transmitted securely using approved methods. Regular data backups should be performed to prevent data loss, and secure data destruction methods should be used when necessary. The Clerk should take a full back-up to a memory stick stored separately to the laptop at least every two months. The Council have purchased a

shredder, which the Clerk should use when disposing of personal data and council data that is not already in the public domain.

6. Network and internet usage

Bowes Parish Council does not have its own network as the Clerk works from home. The Clerk is responsible for ensuring that their home network is secure.

7. Email communication

Email accounts provided by Bowes Parish Council through its website provider are for official communication only. Emails should be professional and respectful in tone. Confidential or sensitive information must not be sent via email unless it is encrypted or password protected.

The Clerk must always use a generic gov.uk e-mail account for email communication about council business and ensure that the website enquiry form is linked to this account. Councillors may use personal email accounts for council business if they are secure and are used appropriately.

All users must be cautious with attachments and links to avoid phishing and malware. They must verify the source before opening any attachments or clicking on links.

8. Password and account security

Bowes Parish Council users are responsible for maintaining the security of their accounts and passwords. Passwords should be strong and not shared with others, except when this is unavoidable due to a prolonged absence of a clerk. Regular password changes are encouraged to enhance security.

9. Mobile devices and remote Work

Bowes Parish Council does not provide mobile devices and there is no office so all work is done remotely.

10. Email monitoring

Bowes Parish Council reserves the right to monitor email communications to ensure compliance with this policy and relevant laws.

Monitoring will be conducted in accordance with the Data Protection Act and GDPR.

11. Retention and archiving

Emails should be retained and archived in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements. The Clerk will regularly review and delete unnecessary emails to maintain an organised inbox.

12. Reporting security incidents

All suspected security breaches or incidents should be reported immediately to the Chair for investigation and resolution. The Clerk will report any email-related security incidents or breaches to the website provider immediately.

13 Training and awareness

Bowes Parish Council will ensure that the Clerk receives sufficient training and resources to understand IT security best practices, privacy concerns, and technology updates. The Clerk will cascade key messages to councillors.

14. Compliance and consequences

Breach of this IT and Email Policy may result in the suspension of IT privileges and further consequences as deemed appropriate.

15. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Updates may be made to address emerging technology trends and security measures.

16. Contacts

For IT-related enquiries or assistance, users can contact Ross Woodley, Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. He will liaise with the website provider.

All staff and councillors are responsible for the safety and security of Bowes Parish Council's IT and email systems. By adhering to this IT Policy, the Council aims to create a secure and efficient IT environment that supports its mission and goals.

Date: 5 September 2025

Signature: _____ ROSS WOODLEY

Role: Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer