



Melksham Town Council

Acceptable Use of Email and Internet Policy

Date Adopted: 20th October 2025

Date Due For Review: October 2027



ACCEPTABLE USE OF EMAIL AND INTERNET POLICY

1. Introduction

Under the Data Protection Act 2018, it is important that Melksham Town Council (hereinafter “the Council”) ensures that its data is kept secure. Councillors are required to comply with this Policy.

Please note that additional instructions may be issued from time to time regarding the use of Council-owned computers or systems.

This policy sets out general rules for the acceptable use of digital systems:

- How we use the facilities made available to us reflects on the council.
- Reminds us of our responsibilities to handle personal and sensitive information properly and that customers’/constituents’ e-mail addresses themselves may be personal information
- To consider before sending confidential or sensitive information via email
- Describes how and when personal use of e-mail and internet is permissible
- Requires us to remove personal e-mail from the Council’s systems
- Prohibits the use of Council e-mail addresses on public websites for non-business purposes
- Sets out the circumstances in which the Council may monitor communications.

2. IT Devices

Includes any council owned electronic device, issued for the purpose of council business.

Your computer password is an important piece of confidential information and you should treat it that way. Do not share it with others, and make sure that it is not written down anywhere where an unauthorised person can find it.

You must not delete any software installed and must not install any software without permission from the CEO.

You must take care of any device issued and ensure that it is safe and secure at all times. Any loss of the equipment must be reported immediately so that the device can be disabled.

3. Email

All email correspondence should be dealt with professionally and diligently. Emails are subject to the Data Protection Act 2018 and Freedom of Information requests.

All Councillors should use their adopted official email address for **ALL** Council email communications. No Councillors will use any other email address (including any personal email address) for **ANY** Council email communications.

When using your Council email account, you should be mindful of the fact that any email that you send will be identifiable as coming from the Council. You should therefore take care not to send anything via email that may reflect badly on the Council. In particular, you must not send content of a sexual or racist nature, junk mail, chain letters, cartoons or jokes from your Council email address.

Using a Council email address to send inappropriate material, including content of a sexual or racist nature, is strictly prohibited. Should you receive any offensive or inappropriate content via email you should delete it. Councillors should inform the CEO of this as soon as possible so that they can ensure that it can be fully removed from the system.

The use of a Council email account for bullying or harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.

You should also take care that emails will be seen only by the person intended. Particular care should be taken when sending confidential information that the email has been correctly addressed, marked 'private' and not copied into those not authorised to see the information. Sending confidential information via email without proper authorisation or without taking sufficient care to ensure that it is properly protected will be treated as misconduct.

In cases where you are sending an email to more than one personal account you should blind copy all recipients to avoid a data breach.

While a reasonable amount of personal use of email is perfectly acceptable, your email remains the property of the Council and you should not use your Council email to send or receive any information that you regard as private. The Council may, in the course of its operation, read emails that you have sent or received - although in the absence of evidence of wrongdoing the Council will try to avoid reading personal emails if possible.

Setting up and Closing an Email Account

New email accounts will be set up by the officer or outside consultant, authorised to do so by the CEO. For new Councillors, this will normally be within 48 hours of being elected as a Councillor and for any other position, it will normally be within seven days.

When Councillors cease to be part of the Council, their email account will be closed down and all emails (sent or received) will be archived.

4. Internet Use

Councillors with access to the internet on Council-owned devices should use that access responsibly.

Councillors must not use the internet to view or download offensive or sexually explicit material or material which promotes gambling, discrimination of any kind or the threat of violence.

Councillors must not download any software, plug-ins or extensions on to Council-owned devices unless this is first cleared by the Town Clerk.

Councillors must not use Council-owned devices to download music, video or any other entertainment content.

Firewalls and anti-virus software may be used to protect the Council's systems. These must not be disabled or switched off without the express authorisation of the Town Clerk.

If inappropriate material is accessed accidentally, Councillors must report this immediately to the CEO.

5. Social Media

Councillors behaviour on any social networking or other internet site must be consistent with the behaviour required of being a representative of the Council generally.

Councillors should take particular care not to behave in a way which reflects badly on the Council. Inappropriate or disparaging comments about the Council, colleagues or the town should be avoided.

Social media interactions can be copied and widely disseminated in a way that you may not be able to control, the Council will take a particularly serious view of any misconduct that occurs through the use of social media.

Councillors should not operate a social media account or profile that purports to be operated on or on behalf of the Council without express permission of the Council.

6. Personal/ Business Use

The Council's communications facilities are provided for the purposes of Council business. A certain amount of limited and responsible personal use by users is also permitted.

Although the Council's e-mail facilities are provided for the purposes of Council business, you may occasionally want to use them for your own personal purposes. This is permitted on the condition that all the procedures and rules set out in this policy are complied with. Be aware, however, that if you choose to make use of council facilities for personal correspondence, you can expect very little privacy because the council may need to monitor communications.

Under no circumstances may the Council's facilities be used in connection with the operation or management of any other business or for commercial activity. The facilities should also not be used by councillors for general party-political activity and, in particular, must not be used for campaigning or election activities. They may, however, be used for correspondence within the political group, general political research, casework as a councillor and similar activities. If you have any doubts, please ask.

You must also ensure that your personal e-mail use:

- does not take priority over your responsibilities as a councillor;
- is minimal;
- does not cause unwarranted expense or liability to be incurred by the Council;
- does not have a negative impact on the council in any way; and;
- is lawful and complies with this policy.

After being read, personal e-mails should be either deleted or forwarded to a personal e-mail account and then deleted. You should note though that e-mail is backed up on a regular basis and deleting it from the live system will not necessarily result in it being deleted for good. If you make personal use of our facilities for sending and receiving e-mail you will be treated as having agreed to abide by the conditions imposed for their use, and consented to the council monitoring your personal e-mail in accordance with this policy. If you do not agree or consent to this, then you must not use the system to send or receive personal e-mail.

7. What happens if the policy is breached?

If rules and procedures are not followed, then use of the Council's facilities may be curtailed or withdrawn. Serious breaches of this policy may amount to a breach of the Code of Conduct and the withdrawal of permission to use the Council's equipment for personal purposes.

Some aspects of this policy also deal with matters which amount to criminal offences under the Computer Misuse Act.

If there is anything in this policy that you do not understand, please ask for clarification.