



# Lowestoft Town Council

## IT Policy

### Introduction

The Council works with IT providers that are appropriate for local government public service compliance. This policy is in the context that all data security and GDPR compliance is adhered to by these providers. All staff and councillors will be made aware and trained in security and compliance where relevant.

This policy is intended to provide guidance and criteria for both Councillors and Council staff on the use of both the Town Council's email domain addresses, internet and Town Council provided IT equipment whether it be a lap top or tablet (hereon in known as 'device').

#### **1.0 Limitations on Internet and Email use (staff only)**

- 1.1 The Town Council's email and internet facilities should be used primarily for business purposes and personal use must never take priority over work. However, it is permissible to use the internet and email system for very limited personal use during work time. For example, no more than three short, personal emails a day or three short uses of the internet.
- 1.2 However, officers, may freely access the internet during your lunch breaks, as long as the exceptions, limitations and requirements of the remainder of this policy are adhered to at all times.
- 1.3 The Town Council can monitor such usage and reserves the right to prohibit any personal usage of council systems at any time. This action could be taken in addition to disciplinary action.

#### **2.0 Emails**

- 2.1 Councillors are provided with a Lowestoft Town Council email address (name of [councillor@lowestofttowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:councillor@lowestofttowncouncil.gov.uk)) and all Town Council correspondence should be sent from this address. Councillors should not use their personal email address in relation to their councillor role.
- 2.2 The Town Council's email addresses must not be disclosed inappropriately.
- 2.3 Sending offensive emails, such as racist or sexist emails, will never be tolerated and may be subject to disciplinary proceedings or report under the Code of Conduct to the Monitoring Officer.
- 2.4 Dealing with excessive amounts of email can hinder productivity, therefore caution must be exercised. Only relevant emails should be sent and you should not automatically send or forward all messages to long circulation lists.

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- 2.5 A wrongly delivered message must be redirected correctly and any confidential information contained within such a message must not be used or disclosed.
- 2.6 Although email communications have the same apparent informality as using the telephone, they also have the permanence of written communications and, as such, must be controlled to ensure that they meet the same standards as other published documents.
- 2.7 Laws which apply to written documents also apply to email and therefore, care must be taken to avoid making inaccurate or defamatory statements. Emails must be composed and sent responsibly and you should seek advice before sending a message if there is any doubt about its contents.

### **3.0 Online Journals, Blogs, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter etc.**

*Please also refer to the Town Council's Social Media Policy and Media Policy*

- 3.1 No Town Council or Town Council related information must be posted online without being pre-authorised and written permission obtained from the Town Clerk. This covers all types of media, i.e. photos, videos, webcam as well as comments, opinions etc.
- 3.2 You must never represent your views as being that of the Town Council or allow anyone to mistakenly believe that this might be the case.
- 3.3 No activities you undertake online must be seen to compete with any activity of the Town Council.
- 3.4 No part of the Town Council premises, either inside or outside, must be represented online without prior written permission from the Town Clerk.
- 3.5 It must be understood that if you identify yourself in any way online as being connected with or employed by the Town Council, then any online input is indirectly linked to the Town Council. This creates additional responsibilities with regards to your online input at all times:
- Regardless of what forum you are using;
  - Whether you are at work or in your own time; and
  - Whether you are using work or non-work facilities.
- 3.6 You must adhere to the following:
- You must ensure that it is made entirely clear that any views expressed are your own;
  - Your input must reflect favourably or neutrally on the Town Council because of the link you have chosen to create; and

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- Input must never, even arguably, reflect negatively on the Town Council in any way whatsoever.

- 3.7 The Town Council reserves the right to insist you remove any references to the Town Council from all your online profiles/input/postings.
- 3.8 Disciplinary action will be taken if staff publish Town Council confidential or inappropriate information or any other material or opinion detrimental to the Town Council online. It is immaterial whether this breach of policy occurs during or outside working hours or using office or non-office equipment. This action may include dismissal.
- 3.9 Similarly if Town Council confidential or inappropriate information or any other material or opinion detrimental to the Town Council is published online by a Councillor this will be subject to a Code of Conduct complaint.
- 3.10 On leaving the Town Council for whatsoever reason, you must immediately update any internet profiles to reflect this change.
- 3.11 These obligations continue without limit in time and may be enforced via the courts if need be.

### **4.0 Poor Quality Information**

- 4.1 The internet allows easy access to large amounts of information that is often more up-to-date than that found in traditional sources like libraries. However, because the Internet is uncontrolled much of this information is less reliable than it appears. Therefore, extreme care must be taken when obtaining and using such unregulated material.

### **5.0 Breaking Copyright and/or Intellectual Property Laws**

- 5.1 A great deal of material on the internet may be protected by copyright and/or Intellectual Property laws. Therefore, copying or usage of such material without the express written permission of the Town Clerk is prohibited. If in any doubt as to whether such material is covered by such laws/regulations, please refer the matter to the Town Clerk before taking any action which might later be considered to be unlawful.

### **6.0 Data Protection Act**

- 6.1 At all times using email or the internet, you must be fully aware of your responsibilities under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the statutory right of others to request information either by subject access requests or Freedom of Information requests.

### **7.0 Backup Policy**

- 7.1 The Town Council's IT Network is backed-up daily and this is controlled by East Point Business Services.



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#### **8.0 Software**

- 8.1 The software used or developed by the Town Council is confidential and must at no time be used for any purpose other than that for which it is licensed or for which it is authorised to be used by the Town Council, nor removed from the Town Council's premises.
- 8.2 Viruses, worms and other malicious software (typically introduced through email or infected files) are a significant threat to computer security throughout an organisation. Therefore, every precaution must be taken when using email and/or downloading software.
- 8.3 You must notify the Town Clerk and EPBS without delay if your virus protection software notifies you that a virus has been found
- 8.4 Never load software (this includes illegal or free software) onto any computer belonging to the Town Council without permission of the Town Clerk.

#### **9.0 Security**

- 9.1 You must adhere to the Town Council's password regulations. You must never provide inappropriate access to Town Council/work-related passwords to any other employee or councillor; additionally Town Council/work-related passwords must never be made accessible to any non-employee.
- 9.2 You are also responsible for the security of your allocated device and you must ensure that it is not used by unauthorised people.
- 9.3 If you are provided with use of a device, it is considered of the utmost importance that you ensure there is appropriate and sufficient security of any sensitive or confidential data. Failure to ensure this is considered to be a gross misconduct matter, regardless of whether any incident actually occurs which places the company at risk of reputational or other damage.
- 9.4 You must exercise extreme caution when considering whether to download any Town Council or Town Council related data on to any removable storage device. If in any doubt, please speak to the Town Clerk before downloading material. If it is decided that material can be downloaded, it is your responsibility to ensure the security and safety of the storage device and the information therein. Failure to ensure this is considered to be a gross misconduct matter, regardless of whether any incident actually occurs which places the company at risk of reputational or other damage. NOT USE MEMORY TRANSFER VIA EXTERNAL STORAGE DEVICES.

#### **10.0 Monitoring**

- 10.1 The email system and Internet are available for communications directly concerned with the business of this organisation. The Town Council reserves the right to intercept, monitor and view all data sent or received electronically by you, whether internally or externally, and all Internet sites accessed by you using computer equipment or other property owned by the Town Council, or using any other computer equipment or property during your working hours, regardless of whether such data and/or sites relate to the business of the Town

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Council or otherwise. This monitoring would include any information you might consider to be private and personal but has involved the Town Council's IT facilities.

### 11.0 Unauthorised use of IT

11.1 Any unauthorised use of email, Internet or the IT systems or breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal, including summary dismissal, being taken against you. Similarly, a Councillor will be subject to a Code of Conduct complaint.

11.2 By way of example only, the Town Council will not tolerate the use of the system for any of the following. This list is not exhaustive:

- Accessing, sending and/or downloading offensive, obscene, pornographic or indecent material, or even visiting such websites, is forbidden and will generally result in dismissal;
- Any message that could constitute bullying or harassment;
- Accessing, sending and/or downloading discriminatory material or anything that would breach the terms of the equal opportunities policy;
- Excessive personal use;
- Inappropriate personal use on company equipment even in your own time e.g. forwarding/creating inappropriate jokes/cartoons, creating or forwarding chain letters, online gambling etc;
- Downloading or distributing copyright information and/or any other unlicensed software;
- Posting confidential or derogatory information about other workers, the Town Council or its customers or suppliers, whether this is undertaken from the office or on another IT/phone system.

11.3 Any contractual terms and disciplinary rules also apply.

### 12.0 Ownership and Termination of Employment (staff) or Term of Office (councillors)

12.1 Staff are provided with laptops as part of their employment. Councillors choosing to accept a Town Council owned lap top as part of their tenure as Councillor will be required to complete a Laptop Acceptance Form.

12.2 On termination of employment, resignation from Councillor, end of term of office or at any point by request of the Town Clerk, the staff member or councillor must return the any IT equipment, software and related accessories.

12.3 All IT equipment, software, data, related contracts and accessories, provided by the Town Council, remains the property of the Town Council. All data contained on the any IT equipment is the property of the Town Council and the Town Council reserves the right to own, control and interrogate that data.

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### **13.0 Compliance**

- 13.1 All councillors and members of staff who use Town Council issued IT equipment are obliged to adhere to this policy. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

### **14.0 Data Protection and Security**

- 14.1 All devices must be encrypted and protected by the Sophos Protection software. This will be managed centrally by Town Council's IT provider.
- 14.2 The device will be for Lowestoft Town Council purposes only. Do not set up your personal email address, or any other email accounts, on this device.
- 14.3 Do not link up, download or otherwise access personal third party apps or services, including on-demand TV and other media streaming services
- 14.4 You will be required to set a password to access the device. You will receive a prompt periodically to change their password, in line with the Town Council's security measures via the IT provider.
- 14.5 The password must be unique and must not be recorded. If a password is forgotten please contact a member of staff.
- 14.6 You must not jailbreak your device (modify or remove restrictions to allow access to restricted sites or the downloading of prohibited software), or otherwise hack or tamper with it.

### **15.0 User Responsibility**

- 15.1 Your device must be transported in a suitably protective case (such as a sleeve or padded backpack).
- 15.2 Handle your device with care and respect. Do not throw, damage, place heavy items on, or intentionally drop your device.
- 15.3 Only approved cleaning materials can be used to clean your device, such as laptop or tablet sprays and cloths.
- 15.4 Do not leave your device unattended.
- 15.5 Do not keep, or leave your device unattended in vehicles.
- 15.6 Keep your device safe and secure at all times. You should know where your device is at all times.

### **16.0 Lost, Damaged or Stolen Devices**

- 16.1 If your device becomes lost or has been stolen, report it to a member of staff immediately.
- 16.2 If your device has become damaged, report it to a member of staff and hand the device in to the office.
- 16.3 You must not carry out repairs to your device.
- 16.4 You must not solicit any individual or company to repair your device on your behalf.

### **17.0 Safeguarding and e-Safety**

- 17.1 Do not tamper with any device belonging to other Councillors. Anyone found trying to access another Councillor's device or associated content may be subject to Code of Conduct investigation.
- 17.2 If a device is found, hand it in to the office immediately.
- 17.3 Do not take photographs of others without their express permission.

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- 17.4 You are strictly forbidden from using your device to create, store, access, view, download, distribute, send, upload inappropriate content or materials.
- 17.5 You are forbidden from using your device to partake in illegal activities of any kind.
- 17.6 Do not use your device to post images, movies or audio to a public facing part of the internet, without the express permission of all individuals imaged/recorded.
- 17.7 Your device and any content are subject to routine and ad-hoc monitoring. You must surrender your device upon request by the Town Clerk.

Revisions	
Date	Amendment
February 2021	Incorporated the Secure Use of USB Memory Sticks Policy (previously standalone policy)
June 2021	Changed name from IT, Internet, Social Media, Email and Secure Use of USB Memory Sticks Policy to IT Policy.
June 2021	Incorporated the Tablet Policy (previously standalone policy)
August 2021	Added Code of Conduct to item 22.
November 2022	Policy significantly amended as Councillors are now using LTC owned lap tops