



# Lowestoft Town Council

## IT, Internet, Social Media and Email Policy

### 1.0 Limitations on Email and Internet Use

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 client or office 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 you 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 Town Council equipment must never be used for online gambling, even in your own time.

1.4 The Town Council can monitor such usage and reserves the right to prohibit any personal usage of company systems at any time. This action could be taken in addition to disciplinary action.

### 2.0 Town Council Email Addresses

2.1 The Town Council's email addresses must not be disclosed inappropriately.

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

3.1 No Town Council or Town Council related information must be posted online without being pre-authorized 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
- 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.



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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 On leaving the Town Council for whatsoever reason, you must immediately update any internet profiles to reflect this change.

3.10 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 1998.

#### **7.0 Emails**

7.1 Sending offensive emails, such as racist or sexist emails, will never be tolerated and may be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

7.2 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.

7.3 A wrongly delivered message must be redirected correctly and any confidential information contained within such a message must not be used or disclosed.

7.4 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.

7.5 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.



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#### **8.0 Backup Policy**

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

#### **9.0 Software**

9.1 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.

9.2 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.

9.3 You must notify the Town Clerk and EPBS without delay if your virus protection software notifies you that a virus has been found

9.4 Never load software (this includes illegal or free software) onto any computer belonging to the Town Council without permission of the Town Clerk.

#### **10.0 Security**

10.1 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; additionally Town Council/work-related passwords must never be made accessible to any non-employee.

10.2 You are also responsible for the security of your allocated PC and you must ensure that it is not used by unauthorised people.

10.3 If you are provided with use of a laptop or other electronic 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.

10.4 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 you're the Town Clerk before downloading material. If it is decided that material can be downloaded, it is your responsible 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.

#### **11.0 Monitoring**

11.1 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 Council or otherwise. This monitoring would



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

#### **12.0 Unauthorised use of IT**

12.1 Any unauthorised use of email, Internet or the IT systems or breach of this policy will result in disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal, including summary dismissal, being taken against you. 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.

12.1 Any contractual terms and disciplinary rules also apply.

#### **13.0 Ownership and Termination of Employment**

13.1 On termination of employment or at any point by request of the Town Clerk, the staff member must return the any IT equipment, software and related accessories.

13.2 All IT equipment, software, data, related contracts and accessories, provide by the Town Council, remain 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.

#### **14.0 Compliance**

14.1 All 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.