

# SPENNYMOOR TOWN COUNCIL



## USE OF INTERNET AND E-MAIL FACILITIES POLICY

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Author of Policy:</b>                     | Town Clerk   |
| <b>Date Effective From:</b>                  | 26 <sup>th</sup> October 2021                              |
| <b>Policy Review:<br/>When &amp; By Whom</b> | 5 <sup>th</sup> October 2021<br>Constitution Working Group |
| <b>Next Review:</b>                          | September 2023   |
| <b>Version Control:</b>                      | V4   |

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this document will be posted on the Council's Website [www.spennymoor-tc.gov.uk](http://www.spennymoor-tc.gov.uk) and copies of this document will be available for inspection on deposit in the Council Offices, Town Hall, Spennymoor. Costs are as per the model publication scheme.

This Guide contains important rules covering e-mail and access to the Internet. Many of the rules apply equally to the Council's other methods of communicating internally and externally such as letter and telephone.

Failure to comply with the rules will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter, and depending upon the seriousness of the offence, could lead to your dismissal (in the case of an Officer), referral to Durham County Council's Monitoring Officer (in the case of a Member) and may result in legal claims against you and the Council.

It is vital that you read this Guide carefully. If there is anything you do not understand, you should ask your Manager or the Town Clerk.

As users of the Council's computer equipment, you are under an obligation not to misuse the equipment, system and facilities available to you at work. Improper use of IT equipment and systems will be regarded as an offence under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

All Internet and E-Mail users are expected to be aware of, and follow, the rules below:

- The Internet should only be accessed via the corporately approved method and after authorisation by the Town Clerk.
- Access to the Internet will be limited to appropriate business use on behalf of the Council as determined by the Town Clerk. You must not use the Council's facility to access the Internet for personal use during work time. You should not subscribe to any bulletin boards, newsgroups or any other internet service of any kind whatsoever without prior written permission from the Town Clerk. You should not download software onto the Council's system.
- The Internet must not be used to access sites of a dubious nature. Sites involving material of a sexually explicit or violent nature or material which is offensive in any way are specifically not allowed. You must report accidental access to a dubious site to the Town Clerk and make sure it is logged.
- Make sure that no-one else knows your PC password. Do not use someone else's PC for Internet or E-Mail purposes unless you are authorised to do so. Similarly, do not allow anyone else to use your PC using your password unless they are authorised to do so. Log any use of your machine by others.
- E-Mail facilities are predominately for business purposes, although you are permitted reasonable private usage provided this does not interfere with your duties. E-Mail usage will be automatically logged and monitored and may be inspected at any time without notice. As with telephone calls, you must not spend an unreasonable amount of your working time using this facility.

- If you send a personal E-Mail, start or sign off the E-Mail with the following statement:

“Personal E-Mail. This E-Mail is personal. It is not authorised by or sent on behalf of the sender’s employer. This E-Mail is the personal responsibility of the sender”

- Ask yourself, before sending an E-Mail, how you would feel if your message was read out in Court. E-Mail messages may have to be disclosed in litigation.
- Obtain confirmation for receipt for important E-Mails sent; and make and keep hard copies of important E-Mails sent and received.
- Check your E-Mail on each working day or arrange for a duly authorised person to do so on your behalf.
- Reply promptly to all E-Mail messages requiring a response. Where a prompt detailed response is not possible, send a short E-Mail acknowledging receipt and giving an estimate of when a detailed response will or should be sent.
- Do not impersonate any other person when using E-Mail or amend messages received.
- Do not import any non-text file, including files received as E-Mail attachments, onto the system without first checking them for viruses, using the approved software.
- Do not create E-Mail congestion by sending trivial messages or personal messages or by copying E-Mails to those who do not need to see them.
- Do not send or forward E-Mail messages or documents which are, or may be construed as harassment or bullying. A clear distinction can be drawn between friendly attention which is reciprocated by another employee, and unwanted or unpleasant behaviour or comments which cause distress or fear. The following paragraphs give a general description of activities which may constitute harassment but do not exclude other forms of inappropriate behaviour which are irrelevant to, and have a negative affect on, the performance of a person’s duties.
  - (i) Sexual harassment includes unwanted conduct or comments based on a person’s sex, sexuality or perceived sexuality which is offensive to the recipient. It can be based on actions, including comments, over a period of time but, where it is sufficiently serious, a single incident will constitute sexual harassment.
  - (ii) Racial harassment includes any racially motivated actions or comments by a person or group of people at work which are directed at one or more employees, which are repeated and/or unwanted; cause humiliation, pain or distress; interfere with job performance or create an unpleasant working environment.

- (iii) Harassment of disabled people includes unwanted conduct or comments made because of an individual's disability or perceived disability. This specifically includes a person's HIV status.
  - (iv) Bullying has been described as the persistent use of offensive behaviour or comments which gradually undermine self-esteem and confidence. A bully is someone who persecutes or intimidates and leaves people feeling hurt, vulnerable or helpless.
- Do not send or forward E-Mail messages or documents which are or may be construed as being defamatory. Defamatory matter is anything which, either directly or by insinuation or irony, tends to expose any person to hatred, contempt or ridicule.
  - Do not send or forward E-Mail messages or documents which are obscene, pornographic or in anyway sexually explicit. A message or document is likely to be deemed to be obscene or pornographic if the effect of any part of it is such as to deprave and corrupt persons who read or see it.
  - Do not send or forward E-Mail messages or documents which are or could be construed as contractually binding the Council in any way, without first obtaining the appropriate authority to enter into the contract and required legal, financial and personnel advice about the terms of the proposed contract.
  - Do not send or forward E-Mail messages or documents which divulge information concerning another employee's private affairs without the consent of that employee; contain confidential information or which would be in breach of the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018/General Data Protection Regulation 2018 or any other legislation restricting or controlling the disclosure of information.
  - Do not utilise information obtained at work to further your private interests or those of your relatives or friends.
  - Do not use Council resources for any type of political purposes. Council resources may only be used for Council business.

**If you are in doubt about any aspect of this Guide or anything you are thinking of doing, ask someone. Your manager, supervisor or the Town Clerk will be able to advise you. Never leave yourself open to suspicion of misuse.**

**PLEASE NOTE: that the Town Council reserves the right to access any Town Council email address where an issue occurs with Data Protection, or there is suspicion of/or an allegation of misuse.**