

# **CROWLE PARISH COUNCIL**

## **E-MAIL GUIDANCE AND PROTOCOL**

### 1. Email Usage

The Council's email system enables users to email the Clerk and Members of the Council, as well as individuals outside of the organisation. Users should be aware that once an email is sent to an individual outside of the Council, it is beyond the Council's control and is not guaranteed to be confidential.

Hoax and/or suspect emails should be reported to the Clerk. They should not be opened or forwarded but "double deleted" i.e. deleted from the users "Inbox" and then "Deleted Items" folder.

### 2. Prohibited Email Activities

The following email activities may breach the Council's Code of Conduct for Members and/or prompt action by the Information Commissioner's Office:

- Examining, changing or using another person's files, output or username without explicit authorisation.
- Sending or forwarding any material that is obscene, defamatory or hateful, or which is intended to annoy, harass or intimidate others.
- Sending or forwarding emails which are likely to damage the reputation of the Council.
- Soliciting emails that are unrelated to Council activities or soliciting non-Council business for personal profit or gain.
- Intentionally interfering with the normal operation of the Council's network, including the propagation of computer viruses and the generation of sustained high-volume network traffic.

### 3. Personal Email Use

The use of personal email for Crowle Parish Council matters is not permitted other than in exceptional circumstances (e.g. pending resolution of short-term issues with PCs/access to Parish Council email account).

### 4. Email Awareness

Email is not a secure method of transmission – it should not be assumed that any email communication is secure or private. Users should take this into account particularly when emailing confidential or sensitive information.

### 5. Email Best Practice

- Ensure that each email has a specific target audience.
- Be selective, especially when deciding who should be sent or copied in on an email (especially routine administrative matters). This ensures that only those who really require the information receive it and avoids wasteful emails and wasted time/resources.

- To ensure transparency, “bcc” should not be used in email correspondence between Councillors. Use “bcc” only if you are copying in a recipient(s) who you think have not given permission for their email to be circulated (e.g. local parishioners), to protect their information.
- The circulation of emails with attachments to large groups should be avoided.
- Emails should not be kept in separate folders in an individual’s folder list longer than is necessary, if at all.
- Time should be set aside on a regular basis for “housekeeping”, in order to delete old or unwanted items from mailboxes. This is essential in order to ensure the efficient operation of the email system and helps to keep mailboxes organised and ensure that councils GDPR retention policy is complied with.
- The ‘Inbox’, ‘Sent Items’ and ‘Deleted Items’ folders should be examined as part of a housekeeping routine. Contact the Clerk for assistance if you are unsure of how to complete any of the processes described in this policy.

## 6. Email Etiquette

Email is all about communication with other people, and as such some basic courtesy should be observed.

- Always include a subject line in your message.
- When replying to an email, include enough of the original message to provide context.

When

- An email signature is a good way of providing detail of who is sending the email, and the details of how to respond.
- Consider the tone and language used, and the use of plain English. When sent externally emails represent and reflect upon the Council.
- Avoid using capitals throughout as this is equivalent to shouting.

## 7. Data Protection

Councillors and officers must keep in mind the requirement not to share the personal contact details/addresses of residents or individuals to anyone outside of the Council without that individual’s express consent. “Outside of the Council” includes councillors/officers from other authorities, the police and government departments/agencies.

Policy Adopted by the Parish Council at its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Next Review due – March 2021