

Little Smeaton Parish Council

IT Policy

1. Introduction

Little Smeaton Parish Council recognises the importance of effective and secure information technology (IT) and email usage in supporting its business, operations, and communications.

This policy outlines the guidelines and responsibilities for the appropriate use of IT resources and email by council members, employees, volunteers, and contractors.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals who use Little Smeaton Parish Council's IT resources, including computers, networks, software, devices, data, and email accounts. This includes the use of personal equipment for council business.

3. Acceptable use of IT resources and email

Little Smeaton Parish Council IT resources and email accounts are to be used for official council-related activities and tasks. Limited personal use is permitted, provided it does not interfere with work responsibilities or violate any part of this policy. All users must adhere to ethical standards, respect copyright and intellectual property rights, and avoid accessing inappropriate or offensive content.

4. Device and software usage

Where possible, authorised devices, software, and applications will be provided by Little Smeaton Parish Council for work-related tasks.

Unauthorised installation of software on authorised devices, including personal software, is strictly prohibited due to security concerns.

Where councillors or employees use their own devices for council business those devices must be secured using passcodes and/or biometric security as appropriate to the device being used.

Additionally, where a device is not used exclusively for parish council business all council documentation and data saved on the device must be kept in a clearly identifiable folder structure. This can be achieved by naming the folder '*Parish Council*' or '*Council*'.

Where a device is shared with others and if the device software permits, the top-level folder should be further password protected providing this can be achieved without a high degree of technical knowledge or the need to purchase additional software.

Care should be taken when downloading council documents from emails or online as the default download location may not be the same as the designated parish council storage location. Documents should be moved to the correct location once downloaded.

When a private device is replaced or no longer needed for parish council business all council documentation and data is to be deleted from the device as soon as possible in accordance with the guidance in this policy.

5. Data management and security

All sensitive and confidential Little Smeaton Parish Council data should be stored and transmitted securely using approved methods. Regular data backups should be performed to prevent data loss, and secure data destruction methods should be used when necessary.

6. Network and internet usage

Little Smeaton Parish Council's network and internet connections should be used responsibly and efficiently for official purposes. Downloading and sharing copyrighted material without proper authorisation is prohibited.

7. Email communication

Email accounts provided by Little Smeaton Parish Council are for official communication only. Emails should be professional and respectful in tone.

Be cautious with attachments and links to avoid phishing and malware. Verify the source before opening any attachments or clicking on links.

8. Password and account security

Little Smeaton Parish Council users are responsible for maintaining the security of their accounts and passwords. Passwords should be strong and not shared with others. Regular password changes are encouraged to enhance security.

9. Mobile devices and remote Work

Mobile devices provided by Little Smeaton Parish Council should be secured with passcodes and/or biometric authentication. When working remotely, users should follow the same security practices as if they were in the office.

10. Email monitoring

Little Smeaton Parish Council reserves the right to monitor email communications to ensure compliance with this policy and relevant laws. Monitoring will be conducted in accordance with the Data Protection Act and GDPR.

11. WhatsApp

Little Smeaton Parish Council uses WhatsApp for informal, internal communications between councillors and the clerk. The parish council WhatsApp group uses the software's built in *Disappearing Messages* feature. All messages and documents shared in the group are automatically deleted after 90 days. This does not supersede the ability of the group Admin or poster of a specific message to delete individual messages before the message time limit expires.

12. Retention and archiving

Emails should be retained and archived in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements. Regularly review and delete unnecessary emails to maintain an organised inbox.

13. Reporting security incidents

All suspected security breaches or incidents should be reported immediately to the designated IT point of contact for investigation and resolution. Report any email-related security incidents or breaches to the IT administrator immediately.

14. Training and awareness

Little Smeaton Parish Council will provide regular training and resources to educate users about IT security best practices, privacy concerns, and technology updates. All employees and councillors will receive regular training on email security and best practices.

15. Compliance and consequences

Breach of this IT and Email Policy may result in the suspension of IT privileges and further consequences as deemed appropriate.

16. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Updates may be made to address emerging technology trends and security measures.

17. Contacts

For IT-related enquiries or assistance, users can contact the Clerk.

All staff and councillors are responsible for the safety and security of Little Smeaton Parish Council's IT and email systems. By adhering to this IT and Email Policy, Little Smeaton Parish Council aims to create a secure and efficient IT environment that supports its mission and goals.

Date: 13 May 2026

Signature: _____

Role: Chairman

Signature: _____

Role: Clerk