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**IT ACCEPTABLE USAGE POLICY**

# Document Purpose

The Parish Council recognises that it has a legal obligation to secure confidential information and acceptable use of its IT equipment provided to councillors and staff.

This document provides the policy framework through which data can be managed and communicated. It covers:

* Acceptable Usage

# Acceptable Usage

All Staff and Councillors are required to read and comply with the conditions of this policy in respect of the way in which the communications mechanisms are utilised. The policy includes computers and all other electronic media.

1. The Council recognises that reasonable use of e-mail facilities to communicate brief personal non offensive messages is acceptable and is a privilege that the Council is prepared to allow, but the amount of time spent must not be abused or it will be stopped.
2. The Council recognises that access to professional information by e-mail or through web sites is a necessary requirement of the job of Clerk to the Council, other staff and councillors making this therefore permitted.
3. Staff and councillors are expected to use technology in a courteous, reasonable and responsible manner. The following activities are not acceptable and anyone found to be involved in them may face disciplinary action. In certain instances the matter will be considered to be gross misconduct:

• Accessing, receiving, sending or displaying messages or pictures/video that are offensive or may be construed to be offensive in nature, including pornography, graphic violence, racial hatred websites and materials;

• Using obscene language;

• Improper use of e-mail and internet;

• Damaging computers, computers systems or computer networks;

• Violating copyright laws;

• Using others’ passwords and identities;

• Issuing of passwords to third parties unless authorised to do so; trespassing in others’ folders, works or files;

• Intentionally wasting limited resources;

• Employing the system for commercial purposes;

• Employing the system for illegal activities;

• Downloading any commercial software;

• Use of personal mobile phones in meetings and during any other Council business (unless authorised).

1. The Council encourages electronic communications with local, national and international organisations.
2. The Council cannot control and is not responsible for the accuracy or content of information gathered over the internet. Security is maintained by appropriate software, internal computer security settings and passwords.
3. It is a requirement of the Council and the duty of all staff to avoid deliberate use of the Council’s internet connections and technology for inappropriate use. Staff should immediately alert the Clerk to the Council or the Chairman of the Council of any suspect material found stored on any computer or elsewhere on the premises.
4. The computer equipment and software must be used as installed. Staff and users may not install/uninstall, delete or change anything on Council computers. Any requirements to change anything should be authorised by the Clerk to the Council and/or the Chairman of the Council.
5. The Council uses a virus-checker on the computers. Staff are forbidden to load disks or memory sticks that have not been virus checked by the system.
6. Access to chat rooms, gaming and other associated sites are not permitted on Council computers.
7. The Parish Council’s email address and IT equipment is only to be used for Parish Council business and must not be used for other personal use.
8. The Parish Council’s IT Equipment can be accessed by all Staff and Councillors.
9. Councillors should only initiate and respond to council business using their assigned @bearstedparishcouncil.gov.uk domain email address. Passwords to this account should not be shared.
10. Emails sent to and from Councillors should be kept for a maximum of 6 months. Emails sent to and from the Parish Office that are deemed routine shall be kept for 6 months with any email sent to or from the Parish Office that are deemed important will be kept indefinitely.

This policy will be reviewed annually.