



WILLITON PARISH COUNCIL

**2 Killick Way
Williton
Taunton
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TA4 4PY**

Tel: 01984 633979

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www.willitonparishcouncil.org**

IT and ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

Introduction

The Parish Council understands that the use of digital and electronic communication enables it to interact in a manner that improves the communications both within the Parish Council and between the Parish Council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

The Parish Council has a website and uses email to communicate. The Parish Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Should the Parish Council add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers, this policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL – BUSINESS USE

Communications from the Parish Council are expected to meet the following criteria:

- Be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- Not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;
- If official council business, it will be moderated by the Clerk to the Parish Council as the Proper Officer.

Parish Council website:

Occasionally, the Parish Council may direct those contacting the Council to its website to see the required information if it is in the public domain. The website can be found at www.willitonparishcouncil.org

Parish Council email:

The Parish Council has a dedicated email addresses clerk@willitonpc.org.uk, admin@willitonpc.org.uk and office@willitonpc.org.uk. The email accounts are monitored and responded to during office hours and the Parish Council aims to reply to all questions sent as soon as practically possible.

The Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and passing on any relevant mail to members or external agencies for information and/or action. All communications on behalf of the Council will usually come from the Clerk or Assistant to the Clerk and otherwise will always be copied to the Clerk.

Please note, that members of staff work part-time so will respond as soon as they can. The Parish Council may not respond to every comment it receives particularly if it is experiencing a heavy workload or the comment is for information purposes only.

Emails to the Parish Council become official and will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act. These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

Internal communication and access to information within the Parish Council:

The Parish Council is continually looking at ways to improve its working and the use of electronic communications is a major factor in delivering improvement. Parish Councillors are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct in all their work on behalf of the Parish Council.

All Parish Councillors have a dedicated email given to them once elected or co-opted onto the Council and should ensure that they remove any council email addresses from their personal email accounts. Council members should access their email via webmail from any browser and upon end of service, this should be deleted from all personal devices.

To gain access to Councillors email addresses, members should navigate to <http://www.admin.livemail.co.uk> and use their username and password (given by the Clerk). The password can be changed to one of the members choice. Members can easily bookmark this page to enable speedier access.

By using this, the council has removed the danger of a security breach on a member's own device as the emails viewed are not downloaded to the device used to access them.

The Local Government Act 1972 s 12 has been amended under Section 8 of the Electronic Communications Act 2000 to allow local authorities to send their members summonses to attend meetings, including agenda and related papers to meeting, electronically. The Parish Council has amended its own Standing Orders to allow the authorising of the use of electronic communication.

As more information becomes available electronically, it is vital that all information is treated sensitively and securely. Parish Councillors are expected to maintain an awareness of the confidentiality of information that they have access to and not to share confidential information with anyone. Failure to properly observe confidentiality may be seen as a breach of the Parish Council's Code of Conduct and will be dealt with through its prescribed procedures (at the extreme it may also involve a criminal investigation).

Members should be careful only to cc essential recipients on emails and avoid use of the 'Reply to All' option (whilst ensuring that the people who need to know the information are copied in, including the Clerk on all correspondence) and ensure that email trails have been removed.

GENERAL DATA PROTECTION AWARENESS:

Whilst Parish Councils are expected to comply with Data Protection legislation, individual Councillors will also need to ensure that they protect an individual's personal data whether it is stored electronically or as a hard copy. The applies only to living individuals (not the deceased, companies, other authorities and charities)

- Personal data includes:
- Names and addresses
- Telephone numbers
- Email addresses
- IP addresses

Councillors are required to implement the following agreed measures to comply with the legislation:

- Only use Williton Parish Council email account for Parish Council correspondence
- Ensure that all devices (computers, laptops, phones) are password protected.
- Not forward on emails or email threads as they may contain personal data.
- Delete emails which are no longer required.
- Where possible direct all correspondence to the Clerk who can obtain the necessary consent
- Where possible avoid holding an individual's information in a Councillor's home or on a Councillors own PC. If a Councillor must hold any information containing personal data on behalf of the Parish Council, it needs to be stored securely in a locked room or cabinet or if on a PC, in an encrypted folder.
- Ensure that their anti-virus software and operating system is up to date.
- Ensure that their computer's firewall is turned on.
- Inform the Parish Office of any breaches within 48 hours.

Re-Adopted at Williton Parish Council Meeting held on 7th October 2024 (Item 24/167.6)

Signed (Chairman)

Review Date: