



Chandler's Ford Parish Council

IT, Email and Social Media Policy

Purpose

Chandler's Ford Parish Council's (CFPC) internet facility exists to support the organisation's business requirements. Appropriate use of the internet and email facility is regarded as acceptable provided that the conditions specified in this policy have been fulfilled.

With the ever-increasing use and variety of social media consideration must be given to the appropriate use by staff and Councillors to ensure that it is effective, lawful and does not compromise Council information or computer systems / networks.

Equipment

IT equipment, hardware and software are the property of CFPC. Authorised users are responsible for its security and appropriate use.

Staff must not attempt to modify or alter the hardware without the authorisation of the Clerk. Similarly, no attempt should be made to modify, delete or alter the set-up of the windows environment or any software loaded on Council workstations. Any new software should only be installed by the Council's IT contractor with the authority of the Clerk.

The making of illegal copies of software, or any other action that could violate software licence agreements are prohibited.

Faults

In the event of any hardware or software fault authorised users are required to contact the Council's appointed IT contractor.

Acceptable Use of the Internet

No use of the internet is permitted without the active use of a firewall and up-to-date anti-virus.

Intentional use of internet resources to access, transmit or retrieve any material or communications that are -

- obscene
- sexually explicit
- discriminatory or harassing nature
- derogatory to any individual or group
- threatening in nature

is prohibited.

Software or files that are not connected with your work for Chandler's Ford Parish Council should not be download.

Any sites which require registration or payment for services must not be accessed without the authority of the Clerk.

Use of Email

The use of email to exchange correspondence requires the same professional standards as other forms of communication. You should not send or forward mail which is defamatory or offensive for whatever reason.

In order to protect the Council's equipment and data from viruses, email attachments which might contain macros (word processor and spreadsheet files) or applications, should not be opened if they are from an unknown sender. They should be deleted.

When constructing an email the following points should be observed –

- A subject of the email within the subject line should be well defined.
- Use "Urgent" appropriately.
- Use appropriate formality at the start and finish of any email.
- Check grammar and spelling.
- Emails should not commit the Parish Council in any way without prior authorisation of the Clerk.
- Use block capitals or bold text appropriately as this can be interpreted as aggressive.
- Use the confidential disclaimer when email contents are sensitive and not to be shared or forwarded.

Staff should be aware that emails received or sent may be retained in an overall system archive, even if they have been deleted from your own email account. This is to ensure that CFPC complies with Data Protection Laws and in accordance policy.

Staff must also ensure that the suitable signature footer is used as standard which states confidential nature of email along with compliance to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or other legal duty.

CFPC acknowledges the Information Commissioners Office Guidance on the use of emails and personal emails and has opted to exceed the standards suggested by adopting an allocated specific email address using the Parish domain for Councillors and staff in accordance with HALC recommendation.

Councillors should only use email accounts provided by CFPC for Parish Council business and not private or personal email accounts. Any email account may be subject to full investigation by the Information Commissioner's Office as part of a GDPR breach.

Please be aware when adding personal comments or forwarding email chains without first checking that the content is suitable for the recipient.

Data protection

To comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 personal data shall be processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including protection against unauthorised or

unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage, using appropriate technical or organisational measures.

Care should be taken that private email addresses are not inadvertently circulated. Private email addresses should be treated as confidential. Emails to multiple addresses outside of Councillors and the Clerk, should be sent as a blind carbon copy (bcc).

Social Media

Social media is a term for internet websites and tools based on user participation and user-generated content. They include social networking sites and other sites that are centred on user interaction. Examples of popular social media tools include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat. Groupings of interest are a natural feature of the development of such systems with people with similar interest being attracted to share information.

Social media provides the Council with the opportunity to communicate to a wider audience instantaneously on a range of subjects. It also provides an opportunity for communication with the wider community. The Council will make use of approved social media tools to quickly disseminate information but will carefully control its use, in order to minimise risk.

Council social media pages

The Clerk or RFO will be responsible for posting on all council owned/run social media pages. If a councillor wishes to post on the council's social media pages, they should contact the Clerk with their proposed text. The decision of the Clerk as to whether to add the social media post is final. Councillors will be consulted if their post is inappropriate or needs revision.

General advice on all social media pages

Anyone posting on social media must comply with legislation, particularly the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Equality Act 2010.

No information can be published that has been received in confidence.

At all times, treat others with respect, avoiding personal attacks and disrespectful, rude or offensive comments.

Ensure that posts do not bring the Council into disrepute.

Staff posting on social media should ensure that the information they are posting is accurate, objective, balanced and informative. Posts should adhere to the council's existing policies and, if sharing a third party's content or link, should ensure the work is credited to the third party concerned.

Corporate council content should not contain party political material, nor promote individual councillors.

The council may promote community projects/events on their social media pages.

Staff will moderate all social media posts, including comments made by members of the public.

Any posting to social media, including comments made on behalf of the Council, must not:

- Use false names or pseudonyms to hide identities.
- Present personal opinions or comments as those of the council.
- Present individuals in a way that may cause embarrassment to the council.
- Post content that is contrary to the decisions of the council.
- Post controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks.
- Engage in personal attacks, online arguments, and hostile communications.
- Identify a third person without their express permission.
- Publish photographs or videos of minors without parental or guardian permission.
- Post any information that infringes copyright.
- Post any content likely to be deemed libellous.
- Post any content that constitutes bullying or harassment.
- Bring the council into disrepute.
- Post offensive language.
- Conduct any online activity that violates laws, regulations or that constitutes a criminal offence.

The council may allow members of the public to comment on their social media pages.

Any comments deemed by staff to contravene the above rules, may be removed.

Social Media for Staff

Staff are at liberty to set up accounts using any platform available but should ensure that they are clearly identified as personal and do not in any way imply that they reflect the Council's views. Staff should, at all times present a professional image and not disclose anything of a confidential nature regarding Council affairs or customers. Comments of a confidential, discriminatory derogatory or libellous nature should not be made and care should be taken to avoid guesswork, exaggeration and offensive language.

Staff are required to not post on their personal social media accounts during their working hours. Any images posted that may reflect the working environment or Council offices will be required to be taken down due to GDPR and confidentiality. Equally, posts which may reflect staff behaviour during working hours may be considered to bring the Council into disrepute.

Social Media for Councillors

Councillors are at liberty to set up accounts using any platform available but must include a disclaimer making it clear that any views expressed are personal and not reflective of the council's viewpoint. Councillors should, at all times, present a professional image and not disclose anything of a confidential nature. Comments of a derogatory, discriminatory or libellous nature should not be made and care should be taken to avoid guesswork, exaggeration and offensive language.

Councillors are not permitted to use council logos or other council identification on personal social media pages, including those pages owned by them using their councillor name. Only council owned social media may contain council identification.

Non-compliance

Reports of non-compliance with the provisions of this Policy will be investigated, as appropriate.

Subject to the findings of any such investigation, non-compliance with the provisions of this Policy will lead to appropriate disciplinary action. This could include dismissal (for employees) on the grounds of gross misconduct. Furthermore, publication of some materials may also constitute a criminal offence, in which case the issue will be reported to the police.

This policy will be reviewed every two years. All new members and employees will be provided with a copy of this policy.

Policy version – ITE&SM2023

Adopted by Full Council – 25 September 2023

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