

Ware Town Council
Internet and Email Policy

This Policy was approved by the Council on 30 October 2017

This Policy will be reviewed by one year after last review

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council recognises that email and internet are important information and communication systems which are used during the course of council business. This policy provides guidelines and procedure to protect users and the Council.
- 1.2 This policy applies to all staff members who have access to the internet and email facilities via Council computers.
- 1.3 The email policy applies to all Councillors in their correspondence with staff members and/or other Councillors and any email sent from a waretowncouncil.gov email address.

2 INTERNET USAGE

- 2.1 Staff members are encouraged to use the internet responsibly as part of their official and professional activities.
- 2.2 Information obtained via the internet and published in the name of the Council must be relevant and professional. A disclaimer must be stated where personal views are expressed.
- 2.3 The use of the internet to access and/or distribute any kind of offensive material will not be tolerated and may give rise to disciplinary action.
- 2.4 The equipment, services and technology used to access the internet are the property of the Council. The Council reserves the right to monitor internet traffic and monitor and access data that is composed sent or received through its online connections.
- 2.5 If you are given access to the internet you may use it during your breaks at which time you must use it responsibly. This means searching for or viewing or downloading web pages the contents of which is offensive, obscene, discriminatory will not be considered acceptable and may be deemed gross misconduct. Outside of your allotted breaks you must use the internet for legitimate Council business only. Again, during this time, searching for or viewing or downloading web pages the content of which is offensive, obscene or discriminatory may constitute gross misconduct.

3 UNACCEPTABLE USE OF THE INTERNET

- 3.1 Unacceptable use of the internet by staff members includes, but is not limited to:

- Sending or posting discriminatory, harassing or threatening messages or images
- Using computers to perpetrate any form of fraud, and/or software, film or music piracy
- Obtaining, using or disclosing another staff member's password without authorisation
- Sharing confidential material or proprietary information outside of the Council
- Hacking into unauthorised websites
- Sending or posting information that is defamatory to the Council, its services and/or members of the public
- Introducing malicious software onto Council computers and/or jeopardising the security of the Council's electronic communication systems
- Sending or posting chain letters, solicitations or advertisements not related to Council business or activities
- Passing off personal views as those representing the Council

3.2 If a staff member is unsure about what constitutes acceptable internet usage, then he/she should ask his line manager for further guidance and clarification.

4 EMAIL

4.1 Email should be regarded as written paper documents for the purposes of production, usage, retention and disclosure and can be called upon under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Personal information should be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

4.2 Messages sent over the email system can give rise to legal action against the Council. Claims for defamation, breach of confidentiality or contract could arise from a misuse of the system. It is therefore vital for emails to be treated like any other form of correspondence and, where necessary, hard copies should be retained. You are also reminded that messages are disclosable in any legal action commenced against the Council relevant to the issue set out in the email.

4.3 If you are given access to the email system you are responsible for the security of your email account and you must not allow this to be used by an unauthorised person.

4.3 The Council reserves the right to open any email file stored on the Council's computer system.

4.3 The following guidelines for email use should be observed by all staff members and Councillors:-

- Use appropriate language to avoid unintentional misunderstandings
- Respect the confidentiality of information contained within emails, even if encountered inadvertently
- Check with the sender if there is any doubt regarding the authenticity of a message
- Do not open any attachment unless certain of the authenticity of the sender
- Only copy emails to others where appropriate and necessary
- Emails which create obligations or give instructions on behalf of the Council must be sent by officers only, not Councillors
- Emails must comply with codes of courtesy, decency and privacy

4.4 Misuse of the email system in breach of these rules may be treated as misconduct.

5 SECURITY

5.1 If you are given access to a computer you are responsible for the security of your terminal and you must not allow the terminal to be used by an unauthorised person.

5.2 You should therefore keep your personal password confidential and change it regularly. When leaving your terminal unattended or on leaving the office you should ensure you log off the system to prevent unauthorised users from using your terminal in your absence.