

# Bishop Wilton Parish Council IT Policy approved and adopted

24.11.2025

## 1. Introduction

Bishop Wilton 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 Bishop Wilton Parish Council's IT resources, including computers, networks, software, devices, data, and email accounts. It sets out the expectations for the appropriate use of IT equipment and systems provided by the council. It should be noted that at the present time, only the clerk has access to Council owned equipment in the form of a laptop, and recording device, and projector. The clerk and all members use dedicated council email addresses.

## 3. Monitoring of IT Use

**3.1** As an IT provider, the Bishop Wilton Parish Council has the right to monitor the use of its IT equipment and systems, provided there is a legitimate reason for doing so, and councillors, employees and other authorised users are informed that such monitoring may take place.

**3.2** Any monitoring must be proportionate and comply with relevant data protection and privacy laws. Other persons may be included if they access or use council systems e.g. if they have a council e-mail address

**3.3** In cases of legal proceedings against the council, the council may need to temporarily take possession of a device, whether council-owned or personal to retrieve the relevant data.

## 4. Acceptable use of IT resources and email

**4.1** Bishop Wilton Parish Council IT resources and email accounts are to be used for official council-related activities and tasks.

**4.2** Limited personal use is permitted, provided it does not interfere with work responsibilities or violate any part of this policy.

**4.3** All users must adhere to ethical standards, respect copyright and intellectual property rights, and avoid accessing inappropriate or offensive content.

**4.4** Personal information and sensitive data should never be saved on councillors, staff, or other authorised users own devices as this may breach confidentiality agreements, especially if the device is used by other people from time to time **5.**

### **Device and software usage**

Where, authorised devices, software, and applications are provided by Bishop Wilton Parish Council for work-related tasks then the following standards apply.

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

**5.2** All authorised users must lock their computers when leaving their working area in a public environment, to prevent unauthorised access. This applies to all council and personal devices used for work. Failure to comply may lead to disciplinary action.

**5.3** All computer and other electronic equipment supplied should be treated with good care at all times. Computer equipment is expensive, and any damage sustained to any equipment will have a financial impact on the council.

**5.4** Computer and electronic hardware should be kept clean, and every precaution taken to prevent food and drink being dropped or spilled onto it.

**5.5** All computer and mobile equipment will carry a number which is logged against the current owner of that equipment. A database of equipment issued will be kept.

**5.6** Equipment should not be dismantled or reassembled without seeking advice.

**5.7** Personal disks, USB stick, CDs, DVDs, data storage devices etc cannot be used on council computers without the prior approval of the Council.

**5.8** Any faults or necessary repairs must be reported to the Chair and then to full council

### **6. Data management and security**

**6.1** All sensitive and confidential Bishop Wilton parish council data should be stored and transmitted securely using approved methods.

**6.2** Regular data backups should be performed to prevent data loss, and secure data destruction methods should be used when necessary.

**6.3** Prior to the disposal of any device that has work data stored on it, and in the event of a user leaving the council, councillors, staff, and other authorised users are required to allow the IT provider access to the device to ensure that all passwords, user access shortcuts and any identifiable data are removed from the device. **6.4** Councillors, staff, and other authorised users must take responsibility for understanding how their device(s) work in respect to the above rules if they are accessing council servers/services via their own IT equipment

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## **7. Network and internet usage**

Bishop Wilton 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.

## **8. Email communication**

**8.1** Email accounts provided by Bishop Wilton Parish Council are for official communication only.

**8.2** Council email facilities are intended to promote effective and speedy communication on work-related matters

**8.3** Emails should be professional and respectful in tone. Confidential or sensitive information must not be sent via email unless it is encrypted.

**8.4** Be cautious with attachments and links to avoid phishing and malware, or the introduction of viruses. Verify the source before opening any attachments or clicking on links.

## **9. Use of social media**

**9.1** Social media includes blogs; Wikipedia and other similar sites where text can be posted; multimedia or user generated media sites (YouTube); social networking sites (such as Facebook, LinkedIn, X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, etc.); virtual worlds (Second Life); text messaging and mobile device communications and more traditional forms of media such as TV and newspapers. Care should be taken when using social media at any time.

**9.2** The council recognises the importance of councillors, staff, and other authorised users joining in and helping to shape sector conversation and enhancing its image through blogging and interaction in social media. Therefore, where it is

relevant to use social networking sites as part of the individual's position, this is acceptable.

However, inappropriate comments and postings can adversely affect the reputation of the council, even if it is not directly referenced. If comments or photographs could reasonably be interpreted as being associated with the council, or if remarks about external stakeholders, could be regarded as abusive, humiliating, sexual harassment, discriminatory or derogatory, or could constitute bullying or harassment, the council will treat this as a serious disciplinary offence. Councillors, staff, and other authorised users should be aware that parishioners or other local organisations may read councillors, staff, and other authorised users' personal weblogs, to acquire information, for example, about their work, internal council business, and employee morale. Therefore, even if the council is not named, care should be taken with any views expressed.

#### **10. Password and account security**

Bishop Wilton 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.

#### **11. Mobile devices and remote Work**

If mobile devices are provided by Bishop Wilton Parish Council they 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.

#### **12. Email monitoring**

Bishop Wilton 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.

#### **13. 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.

## **14. 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.

## **15. Training and awareness**

Bishop Wilton Parish Council will offer regular training and resources to educate users about IT security best practices, privacy concerns, and technology updates. All employees and councillors will be offered regular training on email security and best practices.

## **16. Health & Safety**

**16.1** The council has a duty to ensure that regular appropriate eye tests, carried out by a competent person, are offered to employees using display screen

**16.2** Any VDU user who feels that their workstation requires changes to make it compliant must speak to the Chair or the Clerk

**16.3** If any hazards are detected at a workstation, including 'noises' from the IT equipment, this should be reported immediately to Chair or the Clerk.

## **17. Compliance and consequences**

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

## **18. 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.

## **19. Contacts**

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

All staff and councillors are responsible for the safety and security of Bishop Wilton Parish Council's IT and email systems. By adhering to this IT and Email Policy,

Bishop Wilton Parish Council aims to create a secure and efficient IT environment that supports its mission and goals.

Date: 24.11.2025

Signature: S Morrison

Role: Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer Data Controller