



## COUNCILLOR EMAIL AND IT USE GUIDANCE

### WRITTEN BY:

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March 2024

### APPROVAL DATE:

Finance Strategy and Management Committee – 26 March 2024

Town Council – 9 April 2024

### REVIEW DATE:

March 2025

### INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this guidance is to bring together elements of Town Council policies, which can provide support in the management of Town Council devices and/or accessing information on personal devices. The Town Council will make available devices that can access emails and documents for meetings, if a Councillor does not have a suitable personal device.

### SUMMARY

2.1 Please ensure any phone or computer you use the Councillor email address on:

- a) Is password/pin protected.
  - b) Has up-to-date anti-viral software.
- Do not share the password to your account with anyone else, Councillor, Officer, or Prism staff.
  - Do not use your Biddulph Town Council email address for anything other than Town Council Business.
  - Do not forward any emails that contain personal or confidential email to:

- a) Anyone who does not have a legitimate purpose for holding these details.
- b) A non-Town Council email address, without appropriate encryption or security measures (Officers will be able to advise you on this).
- If you think that someone else may have accessed or be able to access your email account, contact Town Council Officers.
- If you have accidentally sent personal data to someone who does not have legitimate reason to hold this, contact Town Council Officers as this may need to be reported to the Information Commissioners Officers.
- Please ensure you are aware of the current policies affecting your email use.
- Councillor email addresses will be provided on the Biddulph Town Council website. We ask that you check your emails regularly and provide a response within 7 days of an email. You can set up an auto-response for when you are away.
- Please use the standard signature provided to you.
- You are responsible for taking all reasonable precautions to keep your email secure, and any devices safe, secure and in good working order.

## **From the Social Media Press and Public Communication policy**

### **EMAIL AND LETTER COMMUNICATION**

3.1 Many of the same principles outlined in the above sections are applicable to email and letter communication, however, there are a few additional points which relate specifically to this form of communication:

- Official correspondence regarding Town Council matters must be provided on either Town Council letterhead or a Town Council email address.
- Town council letterhead or emails must not be used for any communication which is not authorised by the Town Council: Emails and letters to the public, press or external companies which relate to Town Council matters but are not official Town Council communication, must make clear that the matter is a personal communication only.  
Emails or letters from Councillors or Officers must never be sent anonymously or under a pseudonym.
- For Town Council matters, Councillors must not use an Officer's personal email or postal address unless specifically directed otherwise (for instance in the event of a Town Hall closure or email outage, and only at

the Chief Officer's direction or as directed by the Emergency Plan/Business Continuity Plan)

- Any confidential information on emails or letters must be appropriately encrypted, refer to the GDPR policy regarding this matter.

## **From the Data Protection and Retention Policy**

### **ACCEPTABLE USE OF PERSONAL DEVICES AND EMAIL ACCOUNTS**

4.1 Despite the problems associated with personal devices, at present, some use is unavoidable. Therefore personal devices and email for Council business should only be used where there is no reasonable alternative option, and only when sufficient measures are in place to manage the risk.

4.2 All personal devices used for Council business must be pin and passcode secured and have a facility to remotely wipe data. They must only be used on WiFi networks with an appropriate level of security.

4.3 It should always be endeavoured to ensure that no personal information is sent to personal email addresses or downloaded on to personal devices. Anonymising or removing the personal information from an email or attachment may allow the information to be shared in a low risk way. The personal information, if needed and adheres to the principles outlined in the GDPR, may then be provided over the phone, thus preventing the physical storage or retention of such information.

4.4 Where the downloading or retaining of information on a personal device or the sending of personal information to a personal email account, is unavoidable, the following must be adhered to:

- Only the minimum and least identifiable method of sharing the information should be given (for instance using initials rather than a full name).
- Documents must be appropriately encrypted and password protected. The password for the information must not be sent via email, but rather provided over the phone. A text message may be acceptable if the email is not accessible from that phone.
- Any email that includes personal information must contain a statement that informs the user that personal information is contained within, and

must be only used for the intended purposes and deleted immediately when the information is no longer required.

- The receiver of the email must have previously agreed to receive this information and handle in accordance with the IT Acceptable Use Agreement (which includes deleting the information as soon as possible.)

4.5 Where a person becomes aware of a privacy breach on a network, device or email account that contains information relating to Council business, they must inform the Chief Officer immediately so appropriate remedial action and reporting can take place. This includes reporting where an email is hacked, phishing software located or where a device is lost or stolen.

4.6 To improve the standards of information security within Biddulph Town Council, all Councillors have a Biddulph Town Council email address which should be used for all Biddulph Town Council related business. As per the IT acceptable use agreement, emails to Biddulph Town Council email addresses must not routinely be forwarded to any other personal or organisational email addresses held by the same Councillor, other than in exceptional circumstances and only where the measures in place under section 9.4 are adhered to. This means that it is not permissible to put an auto-forward on for emails to be automatically sent to a personal, business, District Council or County Council email address.

## HELP OR SUPPORT

5.1 If you are having difficulties accessing or using your email, you can call Prism Solutions on 0345 121 7770

## CARING FOR YOUR DEVICES

6.1 it is expected that you take care of your devices and keep them in good working order. To ensure you do this, we ask:

- Avoid extreme temperatures – ensure IT devices are not left in directly sunlight or outside.
- Avoid moisture – be careful with drinks around your laptop and do not use water to clean a computer or phone. Store devices in a dry place.
- Ensure the air vents on your device can't overheat – you can do this by using a cloth or compressed air cleaner.

- Ensure cords are stored suitably and keep the devices away from young children and pets.
- Make sure you shut down properly when you finish using the computer. This will help the battery last longer and prevent overheating.
- Keep your laptop on a stable surface to prevent damage by falls etc.
- Clean your device using a soft microfibre cloth and/or compressed air. You do not need to use any chemicals or wipes.

If a council-issued device is damaged because you haven't followed good practice guidance or you have been reckless in looking after it, you will likely be asked to pay for the damage.