



# **Internet/Email, Social Media and Mobile Phone use at work at work Policy**

Full Council Approved: May 2019  
Reviewed: May 2022  
Due for next Review: May 2025

## **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework to ensure that there is continuity of procedures in the use of internet/email social media and mobile phone use within the Council. These systems have established themselves as important communication facilities within the Council and have provided contact with colleagues, residents and suppliers. Therefore, to ensure that we are able to utilise these systems to their optimum we have devised a policy that provides use of these facilities whilst ensuring compliance with the legislation throughout.

All staff using the Internet, external email, social media or mobile phones will be required to comply with this policy. Breaches of the procedure will be considered a serious breach and will lead to disciplinary action.

Inappropriate use can cause problems ranging from reputational damage to serious legal claims against the Council. The Council reserves the right to open any email and to check email and internet use.

## **2. Internet**

Where appropriate, duly authorised staff are encouraged to make use of the Internet as part of their official and professional activities. Where personal views are expressed a disclaimer stating that this is the case should be clearly added to the correspondence. The intellectual property right and copyright must not be compromised when publishing on the Internet. The use of the Internet to access and/or distribute any kind of offensive material, or material that is not work related, leaves an individual liable to disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal.

### **3. Email**

The use of email is encouraged as its appropriate use facilitates efficiency. Used correctly it is a facility that is of assistance to employees. Inappropriate use however causes many problems including distractions, time wasting and legal claims.

In using the email system, staff should give particular attention to the following points:

- Unauthorised or inappropriate use of the emails system may result in disciplinary action which could include summary dismissal.
- The email system is available for communication and matters directly concerned with the legitimate business of the Council. Employees using the Email system should give particular attention to the following points: -
  - All emails should maintain professional standards
  - Email messages and copies should only be sent to those for whom they are relevant
  - Flame mails (i.e. emails that are abusive) must not be sent.
  - If an email is confidential the user must ensure that the necessary steps are taken to protect confidentiality.
  - Offers or contracts transmitted by email are as legally binding on the Council as those sent on paper.

The Council will not tolerate the use of the emails system for unofficial or inappropriate purposes, including: -

- Any messages that could constitute bullying, harassment or other detrimental behaviour.
- Personal use (e.g. social invitations, personal messages, jokes, cartoons, chain letters or other private matters).
- On-line gambling.
- Accessing or transmitting pornography.
- Transmitting copyright information and/or software available to the user.
- Posting confidential information about other employees, the Council, residents or suppliers.

### **4. Social Media**

Social media refers to the various internet-based communication sites, methods and tools, including Facebook, Twitter, Linked-In, Instagram and the ever-growing range of these. Social media use is subject to the same rules of the Council as relate to the use of email and the internet. They should be used sensitively and responsibly in dealings with and concerning staff, residents, suppliers and Council-related business and issues, both at and outside working

hours. Staff should not make use of any personal social media such as Facebook, Twitter etc during work hours except during normal break. The following are strictly forbidden:

- any message that could constitute discrimination, victimisation, bullying or harassment or considered to be personally offensive to the recipient(s), including but not limited to a protected characteristic as defined under the 2010 Equality Act (i.e. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation).
- any message that refers or could be construed to refer, detrimentally, untruthfully or inaccurately to other colleagues, residents and other individuals or organisations who could be considered as having a connection with the Council
- or any message that could be detrimentally associated with the Council's operations and business.

## **5. Telephones and Mobile Phones**

Telephones are essential for Council business. Incoming and outgoing personal calls are allowed in emergencies only. Staff should not make or receive personal calls on their mobile phones during work hours except during normal breaks, apart from emergency calls.

## **6. Breaches of this Policy**

The Council will consider failure to follow this policy and any breaches of it as a serious matter and will be dealt with under the provisions of the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Any breaches found to be upheld following a disciplinary investigation could result in action being taken against the individual(s) involved up to and including summary dismissal.

Should the Council be found liable because of the act of an employee(s), it reserves the right to claim compensation from the individual(s) involved.

Employees who feel that they have cause for complaint as a result of email or internet communications should raise the matter with their manager in the first instance. If necessary, the complaint can be raised through the Council's Grievance Procedure.