



COUNCILLORS EMAIL POLICY - for Westgate on Sea Town Council.

Adopted: 05.04.2022 Review due: 04.2023

Policy Statement

This policy is an advice note for Councillors setting out good practice in the use of emails between Members and between Members and Town Council staff.

In drawing up this advice, it is acknowledged that Councillor's private email accounts cannot be monitored in anyway. However, there are defined protocols within the existing Town Council policies for example the Press and Media Policy.

It should be noted that, as yet, within our Parish and Town Councils there is no policy precedent set for Councillor's use of emails. Council staff who have access to Council owned computers can however be subjected to a defined email policy; which is in place for Westgate on Sea Town Council.

This document outlines the protocol which Councillors are advised to follow when using email correspondence in the course of discharging their duties and responsibilities as Town Councillors. The Town Council uses Office 365 and all Councillors have a dedicated .gov.uk email address for their Town Council work; this should be used for all Council emails. This is to aid them in their work, present a professional image and assist the Council in managing its obligations with regards to data protection and freedom of information requests. The Town Council is a corporate body working within the framework of the law and local governance. As such, all Town Councillors are responsible for maintaining a professional approach at all times.

1. Email Usage

1.1 In the interests of good practice Councillors are expected to refrain from creating unnecessary email congestion by sending messages of a trivial nature to the Town Council staff and Members.

1.2 Councillors should not send emails that contain offensive, racist or obscene comments.

1.3 The copying of emails should be relevant to those they are being sent to; the subject matter specifically relates to them or their responsibilities.

1.4 Councillors must honour the confidentiality statement, required with all email correspondence from all devices and not share or divulge information with third parties.

1.5 Councillors must be aware that all Town Council decisions are binding and therefore all public comments should be confined to matters on which the Council has reached agreement. More details concerning this can be found in the Council's Press and Media Policy relating to contact with the press and other media.

1.6 The content of emails must show respect for staff, Members and residents, bearing in mind the fact that first tier local government emails could be subjected to public scrutiny as evidence in court and under current law email messages may in certain circumstances have to be disclosed in litigation. There is also the potential damage to the Council's reputation to consider.

1.7 All emails must comply with General Data Protection Regulation; this requires organisations to protect personal data in all forms, it also changes the rules of consent and strengthens people's privacy rights.

1.8 Town Council information is held by Town Council officers and some is held by Town Councillors. The information held by Town Councillors is subject to the Freedom of Information Act and must be made available if requested in accordance with the FOI Act and GDPR Regulations. Councils must ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of all personal data they hold, even if the data is being processed through personal email accounts or is stored on a privately owned device.

1.9 Out of office automatic reply messages should be used when Councillors are away, this supports good communication.

1.10 It is considered best practice to have an email signature that is generated when sending emails from all devices to include; the Town Council address, website address, office telephone number, Councillors contact telephone number, the Town Council logo in addition to the disclaimer.

1.11 Any award logos should also be included within the email signature.