

**Brewood and Coven Parish Council
with Bishop's Wood & Coven Heath**

INTERNET:

Acceptable Internet Use Policy

Limited use of the internet by all employees of Brewood and Coven Parish Council (the Council) is permitted. However, employees must ensure that they:

- comply with current legislation
- use the internet in an acceptable way
- do not create unnecessary business risk to the Council by their misuse of the internet
- ensure that usage does not interfere with completion of their work

Use of the Parish Council's internet facilities by Parish Councillors is restricted. However, Councillors should refer to the guidance on use of social media and mobile devices attached to this policy.

Unacceptable behaviour

The following is deemed unacceptable use or behaviour by all employees and also Parish Councillors using their own internet facilities for Parish Council business:

- visiting internet sites that contain obscene, hateful, pornographic or otherwise illegal material
- using the computer to perpetrate any form of fraud, or software, film or music piracy
- using the internet to send offensive or harassing material to other users
- downloading commercial software or any copyrighted materials belonging to third parties, unless this download is covered or permitted under a commercial agreement or other such licence
- hacking into unauthorised areas
- publishing defamatory and/or knowingly false material about Brewood and Coven Parish Council, colleagues, other Councillors and/or customers on social networking sites such as Facebook, 'blogs' (online journals), 'wikis' and any online publishing format
- revealing confidential information about Brewood and Coven Parish Council in a personal online posting, upload or transmission - including financial information and information relating to customers, business plans, policies, staff, other Councillors and/or internal discussions
- undertaking deliberate activities that waste staff effort or networked resources
- introducing any form of malicious software into the network

Council Owned Information Held on Third Party Websites

If you produce, collect and/or process business related information in the course of your work, the information remains the property of the Council. This includes such information stored on third party websites such as webmail service providers and social networking sites, such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

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Monitoring

The Council accepts that the use of the internet is a valuable business tool. However, misuse of this facility can have a negative impact upon employee productivity and the reputation of the Council.

In addition, all of the Council's internet related resources are provided for business purposes. Therefore, the Council maintains the right to monitor the volume of internet and network traffic, together with the internet sites visited. The specific content of any transactions will not be monitored unless there is a suspicion of improper use.

EMAIL:

Acceptable Email Use Policy

Use of email by employees of the Council and Councillors is permitted. However, the Council has a policy for the use of email whereby employees and Councillors must ensure that they:

- comply with current legislation
- use email in an acceptable way
- do not create unnecessary business risk to the council by their misuse of email
- ensure that usage does not interfere with completion of their work

Unacceptable behaviour

The following behaviour by all employees and Councillors is considered unacceptable:

- using the Council's communications systems, including email and telephone to set up or promote personal businesses or send chain letters
- forwarding of the Council's confidential messages to external locations
- distributing, disseminating or storing images, text or materials that might be considered indecent, pornographic, obscene or illegal
- distributing, disseminating or storing images, text or materials that might be considered discriminatory, offensive or abusive, in that the context is a personal attack, sexist or racist, or might be considered as harassment
- Creating a nuisance or harassing employees, other Councillors or members of the public
- accessing copyrighted information in a way that violates the copyright
- breaking in to the Council's or another organisation's system or unauthorised use of a password and or mailbox
- broadcasting unsolicited personal views on social, political, religious or other non-business related matters
- transmitting unsolicited commercial or advertising material
- undertaking deliberate activities that waste staff effort or networked resources
- introducing any form of computer virus or malware into the network

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Monitoring

The Council accepts that the use of email is a valuable business tool. However, misuse of this facility can have a negative impact upon employee productivity and the reputation of the Council.

All of the Council's email resources are provided for business purposes, therefore, the Council maintains the right to examine any systems and inspect any data recorded in those systems.

In order to ensure compliance with this policy, the Council also reserves the right to use monitoring software in order to check up on the use and content of emails. Such monitoring is for legitimate purposes only and will be undertaken in accordance with a procedure agreed with employees.

Sanctions

Where it is proven that an employee has failed to comply with this policy, they will be subject to the Council's disciplinary procedure. If an employee is found to have breached the policy, they will face a disciplinary penalty ranging from a verbal warning to dismissal. The actual penalty applied will depend on factors such as the seriousness of the breach and the employee's disciplinary record and only after a proper investigation having taken place.

Where it is proven that a Parish Councillor has failed to comply with this policy, they will be subject to appropriate sanctions in line with the Parish Council's Code of Conduct.

Agreement

All Council employees and Parish Councillors who have been granted the right to use the Council's internet and email access are required to sign this agreement confirming their understanding and acceptance of this policy.

Signed

Position

Date

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Guidance on Councillor and Staff in Use of Social Media and Mobile Devices

Who does this guidance apply to?

This guidance applies to all Parish Councillors and staff, it is general good practice for professional conduct.

What is the purpose of this guidance?

The purpose of this guidance is to provide parameters for staff and Parish Councillors in appropriate use of social media and mobile devices.

Improper use of social media and mobile devices could be used as grounds for challenging contentions decisions, or result in complaints of breaching the Council's Code of Conduct, for a failure to show respect for others or bringing the Council into disrepute.

To follow these guidelines ensures compliance with the Code of Conduct.

Good practice on the use of social media and mobile devices

Popular social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube Instagram and blogs. Types of mobile devices include mobile phones, smart phones, tablets and laptops.

Parish Councillors may use these and other platforms in their official capacity, but should remember that the public may still perceive them as acting in that capacity even when that is not their intention.

Staff must be aware of the potential damage to the Parish Council's reputation when posting comments on social media and the risk of breaching conditions of employment, leading to a disciplinary investigation and potential dismissal.

The use of social media and mobile devices at meetings

Use mobile devices at meetings sparingly, discreetly and with common sense, considering the impression that they are giving others.

Persistent use of devices during meetings may give the Impression that the Councillor is not paying attention to the item being discussed.

Avoid the following:

Using social medial during meetings where confidential or exempt items of business are being considered.

Checking emails and messages that are not related to the meeting.

Taking and sending electronic images of proceedings.

Extended periods of use that suggest that insufficient attention is being paid at the meeting.

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Personal Use of Social Media by a Parish Councillor

Parish Councillors should be aware and recognise that there is a risk of damage being caused to the Parish Council via their personal use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogging etc) when they can be identified as an elected Parish Councillor. This may be by direct identification (because a profile or content expressly states a Parish Council association) or indirect identification (because friends, family or others know the user is a Parish Councillor).

If, in respect of any personal use of social media, a Parish Councillor can be identified as associated with the Parish Council by the profile or content then the following guidance should be complied with:

- **You should:**
- Expressly state (through a prominent disclaimer) on any profile or content that identifies you as a Parish Councillor (or otherwise refers to or implies a relationship with the Parish Council) that the stated views are your own personal views and are not those of the Parish Council;
- Ensure that readers are not misled into believing that any material published by you is on behalf of the Parish Council, authorised by the Parish Council or official Parish Council policy if it is not;
- Ensure all content that relates to the Parish Council or Parish Council business is accurate, fairly balanced, not misleading and complies with any relevant Parish Council policy;
- Comply with the terms and conditions of the social media site being used.

- **You must not:**
- Make any comment or post material so as to give a reasonable person the impression that you have brought your office as Parish Councillor or the Parish Council into disrepute;
- Present political or personal opinion as fact or as representative of the Parish Council;
- Imply that you are authorised to speak as a representative of the Parish Council nor give the impression that the views you express are those of the Parish Council;
- Post or publish any material that is harassing or bullying. Harassment may include personal attacks on officers or fellow Parish Councillors;
- Publish content that promotes personal/family interests, personal financial interests or any personal commercial ventures;
- Publish content in a way which appears as if the Parish Council has endorsed it;
- Publish content in an abusive manner or contravenes the Parish Council's Code of Conduct;
- Disclose confidential or exempt information, including confidential matters discussed as part of a Parish Council meeting.

If you are in any doubt about this you should first speak to the Monitoring Officer.