

BRACEBRIDGE HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

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Email and use of the internet policy

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Email is regularly used for the management and administration of the business of Bracebridge Heath Parish Council.

2 Purpose

- 2.1 This policy applies to:
- employees
 - elected members (councillors)
 - members of the public
 - other people, companies, contractors and organisations in contact with Bracebridge Heath Parish Council.

3 Policy statement

- 3.1 Bracebridge Heath Parish Council encourages the effective use of email. Such use must always be lawful and must not compromise the Council's information or computer systems.
- 3.2 All users must ensure that their use of email will not adversely affect the Council or its' business and not damage the Council's or its employees' reputations or otherwise violate any of the Council's policies.

4 Use of email facilities

- 4.1 All users must use email responsibly. Bracebridge Heath Parish Council reserves the right to take disciplinary or legal action against any person who fails to comply with this policy.
- 4.2 All users must accept that communications via the Council's email system is not secure or encrypted and they should take particular care when sending potentially sensitive or confidential information.
- 4.3 All users must accept and agree that communications both to and from the Council via email may be monitored for the purpose of ensuring appropriate use of this methodology. Users should also be aware that deleted emails may still be accessible from back-up procedures.

5 Councillor email accounts

- 5.1 Bracebridge Heath Parish Council does not provide email accounts for individual members. However, Councillors are strongly advised to set up a separate account for council business.
- 5.2 Any email account used for council business should be accessed only by the member to whom it belongs.

6 General guidance

6.1 Email users are advised to be aware of the following:

- Messages sent to groups of people must be relevant to all concerned. Copying emails to many individuals is not appropriate unless the information is intended for each person.
- When sending emails ensure that email addresses are not shared without the expression permission of the owner of the email address. The use of the bcc function is recommended where appropriate.
- Correspondence sent by this email is not necessarily seen by the recipient immediately. If the message is urgent, an alternative method of contact should be used.
- Bracebridge Heath Parish Council cannot be held responsible for damages, losses, expenses, demands and/or claims that may be suffered by a user of this facility.
- The clerk may, from time to time, choose to operate a filtering system in order to monitor offensive or clearly inappropriate material and may quarantine any messages in that category.
- Users are responsible for their own management of emails to ensure that ongoing and completed correspondence is filed appropriately.
- Emails are kept for the minimum periods as specified in Council's Document Retention policy.
- Members and employees should be aware that all council related email correspondence may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Relevant emails may need to be disclosed as part of a subject access request.

6.2 All passwords must be kept secure and follow password guidance provided by the National Cyber Security Centre - <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/small-business-guide/using-passwords-protect-your-data>.

7 Business use

7.1 The clerk has sole authority to purchase or acquire goods or services on behalf of the Council via email.

7.2 Email messages have the same status in law as written correspondence (letters and faxes) and are subject to the same legal implications, e.g. may be required to be disclosed in Court.

7.3 Users are required to apply the same high standards to emails as those applied to written correspondence.

7.4 Email inboxes should be checked regularly to ascertain all correspondence within that system.

7.5 Discovery of an email which claims to contain a virus, or a solution to correct a previously transmitted virus, must be reported immediately to the clerk.

- 7.6 All users must comply with the relevant licence terms and conditions when copying and/or downloading material.
- 7.7 Users accept that there is no guarantee of delivery of emails unless acceptance of delivery is requested of the recipient.
- 7.8 All users must comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 (2018) and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 when placing personal data in messages or attachments.

8 Inappropriate use

- 8.1 Users must not use email to abuse or inflame others or to harass or threaten anyone. Responding to abuse, harassment or threatening will not be accepted as an excuse for inappropriate language and/or behaviour.
- 8.2 Recipients of abusive or threatening emails related to the business of the Council must immediately inform the clerk or chairman.
- 8.3 Users must not send emails containing obscene, abusive or profane language.
- 8.4 Users must not send, access, display, download, copy or circulate information to containing stories, jokes or anecdotes that contain:
- pornography or sexually orientated images
 - gambling
 - gaming (playing computer games)
 - promotion of unlawful discrimination of any kind
 - promotion of racial or religious hatred
 - threats including the promotion of violence
 - fraudulent or illegal material promotion of illegal and/or unlawful acts
 - information considered to be offensive, inappropriate or disrespectful to others
 - unauthorised and copyrighted material including music.
- 8.5 Bracebridge Heath Parish Council will report to the police all known incidents in which users intentionally send or receive emails containing the following:
- Images of child pornography or child abuse (i.e. images where children are or appear to be under the age of 16 and are involved in sexual activities or posed to be sexually provocative)
 - Adult material/pornography that breaches the Obscene Publications Acts (1959 & 1964)
 - Criminally racist material
 - Users must not send, receive or disseminate proprietary data or any confidential information belonging to Bracebridge Heath Parish Council to or from a third party unless authorised.

9 Responsibilities & review

- 9.1 The clerk, on behalf of the Council, is responsible for the administration of this policy and will report breaches to the Finance and Policy committee for advice about further action.

9.2 The Finance & Policy committee is responsible for reviewing this policy. This policy will be reviewed every three years or in response to changes in the law.

10 Related legislation, policies and guidance

10.1 This policy is not a substitute for legislation, regulations and codes of practice but defines how the Council will apply the relevant legislation. Related legislation, policies and guidance is listed below:

- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

Bracebridge Heath Parish Council internal documents:

- Data protection policy
- Subject Access Request procedure
- Privacy notices
- Document Retention policy

11 Version control and amendment history

Date approved	Version Number	Revision / amendments made	Review date
April 2015	1.0	New policy	Not identified
October 2020	2.0	New template, reference to password management and use of separate email accounts for council business.	October 2023