

Wortham & Burgate Parish Council

IT & EMAIL POLICY

1. Introduction

Wortham & Burgate Parish Council recognises the importance of effective and secure information technology (IT) and email usage in supporting its business, operations, and communications. This policy outlines the guidelines and responsibilities for the appropriate use of IT resources and email by council members, employees, volunteers, and contractors.

2. Scope of this Policy

This policy applies to all individuals who use Wortham & Burgate Parish Council's IT resources, including computers, networks, software devices, data, and email accounts regardless of their working location or pattern, including those who are home-based or office-based. It sets out the expectations for the appropriate use of IT equipment and systems provided by the council

3. Acceptable use of IT resources and email

Wortham & Burgate Parish Council's IT resources and email accounts are to be used for official council-related activities and tasks. All users must adhere to ethical standards, respect copyright and intellectual property rights, and avoid accessing inappropriate or offensive content. This policy applies to all councillors and staff.

4. Device and software usage

Where possible, Parish Council owned devices, software, and applications will be provided by Wortham & Burgate Parish Council for work-related tasks. Unauthorised installation of software on authorised devices, including personal software, is strictly prohibited due to security concerns.

5. Data management and security

All sensitive and confidential Wortham & Burgate Parish Council data should be stored and transmitted securely using approved methods. Regular data backups should be performed to prevent data loss, and secure data destruction methods should be used when necessary.

6. Network and internet usage

Where provided, Wortham & Burgate Parish Council's network and internet connections should be used responsibly and efficiently for official purposes. Downloading and sharing copyrighted material without proper authorisation is prohibited.

7. Password and account security

Wortham & Burgate Parish Council users are responsible for maintaining security of their accounts and passwords. Regular password changes (at least annually) are encouraged to enhance security. Passwords are personal and must not be shared under any circumstances.

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8. Mobile devices and remote work

Mobile devices provided by Wortham & Burgate Parish Council should be secured with passcodes and/or biometric authentication. When working remotely, users should be aware of data security. Ensure that all internet security (eg Norton Security) is up to date.

9. Email communication

The Parish Council has a dedicated email address clerk@worthamandburgateparishcouncil.gov.uk Email accounts provided by Wortham & Burgate Parish Council are for official communication only. Emails should be professional and respectful in tone. Confidential or sensitive information must not be sent via email unless it is encrypted. Be cautious with attachments and links to avoid phishing and malware. Verify the source before opening any attachments or clicking on links.

Email messages sent on the council's account are for council use only. Personal use is not permitted. The Clerk is responsible for dealing with emails received.

Please note that the clerk/RFO works part-time so will respond as soon as they can. The Parish Council may not respond to every comment it receives particularly if it is experiencing a heavy workload or the comment is for information purposes only.

10. Email monitoring

Wortham & Burgate Parish Council reserves the right to monitor email communications to ensure compliance with this policy and relevant laws. Monitoring will be conducted in accordance with the Data Protection Act and GDPR.

11. Email retention and archiving

Emails should be retained and archived in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements. The Clerk should regularly review and delete unnecessary emails to maintain an organised inbox.

12. Reporting security incidents

All suspected security breaches or incidents should be reported immediately to the designated IT point of contact for investigation and resolution. Report any email-related security incidents or breaches to the IT administrator immediately.

13. SMS (texting)

Members and the Clerk may use SMS as a convenient way to communicate at times. All are reminded that this policy also applies to such messages.

14. Training and awareness

Wortham & Burgate Parish Council will, where necessary, provide regular training and resources to educate users about IT security best practise, privacy concerns, and technology updates. All employees and councillors will receive regular training on email security and best practices.

15. Compliance and consequences

Breach of this IT and Email Policy may result in the suspension of IT privileges and further consequences as deemed appropriate.

16. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Updates may be made to address emerging technology trends and security measures.

17. Contacts for IT-related enquiries or assistance

Users can contact the Clerk to the Parish Council. All staff and councillors are responsible for the safety and security of Wortham & Burgate Parish Council's IT and email systems. By adhering to this IT and Email Policy, Wortham & Burgate Parish Council aims to create a secure and efficient IT environment that supports its mission and goal.

Adopted by Full Council 19/05/2026 Minute reference 18

Next review date: May 2027