



Serving the community

Blaby Parish Council

EMPLOYMENT POLICY NO:1 - E- MAIL AND INTERNET POLICY

Email and internet usage are an important part of effective communication and information gathering within the workplace. They can be a fast and reliable method of communicating both internally and with outside bodies such as members of the public or clients, suppliers etc., which can have obvious significant advantages to our business.

Email and internet usage is limited to legitimate business purposes only. Personal usage is not allowed whilst at work.

Equipment and Data Security

If you are issued with any equipment such as a laptop, mobile phone with email or internet access, PDA, etc. You should take all reasonable steps to ensure the safekeeping of both the equipment and any data either stored, or displayed on any such device. If any such equipment is lost, damaged or stolen as a result of your negligence, we may deduct the cost, or partial cost, of the repair or replacement of any items, from any monies owing to you. We may also invoke the disciplinary process.

All data relating to our business, including that relating to any person in any way related to our business such as a customer or supplier etc. must not be stored on any equipment which does not belong to the council. If you are found to have done so you will be liable to disciplinary action.

Care should also be taken to protect the data from being accessed or read by any unauthorised person. You should therefore ensure that your computer screen is switched off when away from your workstation. If you are accessing information from a mobile device then care should be taken to ensure it cannot be read by anyone around you (e.g. if sitting in a cafe or on the train etc.) The Data Protection Code of Practice should be adhered to at all times when dealing with sensitive personal data.

If passwords are issued, then you should not give your password to any other person, either within the Council or external to it.

Our email and internet systems may only be used by persons authorised by the council to do so. Unauthorised access may result in disciplinary action.

You must not modify any existing systems, programmes, information or data without permission from your Manager. When deleting any information, you should ensure that such a deletion could not have an adverse effect on the council or expose us to any risk.

You are forbidden from downloading or installing any software from any source without express permission from your Manager. This included using USB flash drives, PDA, mobile phone etc.

E-mail Usage

Email can be used both to contact and pass information to others both formally and informally.

Care should be taken to ensure the most appropriate method of communicating with each party is used. You should remember that any offer or contract etc. is just as binding when sent by email as by any other way. The council's standard disclaimer should always be in evidence on emails sent by you.

Care should be taken when transmitting personal, sensitive or confidential information. If you are unsure you should check if the recipients email address is confidential and that they know the nature of the information being transmitted.

You should not breach any copyright or intellectual information when transmitting information.

You should not send any inappropriate material to any party which could be deemed to be offensive, abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, defamatory or derogatory, whether or not the recipient indicates they would object. If you receive any transmission which you deem to be offensive or upsetting, you should immediately notify your Manager.

Additionally, you should not:

Use the system for personal use;

Send or forward chain mail, junk mail, jokes, gossip etc; or

Use the system for trivial and unnecessary messages.

Internet Usage

When you visit websites, devices are often employed to enable the site owner to identify the source of the visit. It is therefore important that you only visit reputable sites which are necessary for the performance of your duties.

You must not visit any site or download any information which is illegal, immoral, offensive, abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, defamatory or derogatory. If you have reason to believe any other employee is doing so, you should report your concerns to your Manager as soon as possible.

You should not attempt to access any information which you know is restricted and you are not authorised to view.

Personal use of our internet system is forbidden.

Monitoring

We will monitor the use of our email and internet system, including where appropriate opening and reading emails (in line with Data Protection legislation). It is therefore important that you do not send any personal emails, particularly of a sensitive or embarrassing nature.

We will monitor usage to ensure:

- Council policies, standards and guidelines are being followed;
- To provide evidence of transmissions and communication; and
- To ensure there is no unauthorised usage.

Use of Social Media

You are forbidden from accessing social media for personal purposes whilst at work, whether on our computer equipment or your own (except for during authorised breaks). Social media is a type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. This includes online social forums such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Social media also covers blogs and video- and image-sharing websites such as YouTube and Flickr. However, this is not an exhaustive list.

We understand that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. While you are not acting on behalf of the Council, you must be aware that you can still damage the Council if you are recognised as being one of our employees.

Whilst you are allowed to say that you work for us, and sometimes want to discuss your work on social media you must not make any derogatory comments regarding our business, other employees, Management, our clients or members of the public, suppliers, or any other person, business or other entity in any way connected to our business. This applies whether or not it is on our equipment or your own and if communicated in works time or your own time.

Your online profile (for example, the name of a blog or a Twitter name) must not contain the Council's name.

If you do discuss your work on social media (for example, giving opinions on their specialism or the sector in which the organisation operates), you must include on your profile a statement along the following lines: "The views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer".

Any communications that you make in a personal capacity through social media must not:

1. Bring the Council into disrepute, for example by:
 - criticising or arguing with members of the public, colleagues or rivals;
 - making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups; or
 - posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content;
2. Breach confidentiality, for example by:
 - revealing trade secrets or information owned by the Council;
 - giving away confidential information about an individual (such as a colleague or customer contact) or organisation (such as a rival business); or
 - discussing the Council's internal workings (such as deals that it is doing with a [customer/client] or its future business plans that have not been communicated to the public);
3. Breach copyright, for example by:

- using someone else's images or written content without permission; or
 - failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something;
4. Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
- making offensive or derogatory comments relating to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or perceived sexual orientation;
 - using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee of the Council); or
 - posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content;
5. Be of a nature which would cause us to lose faith in your integrity, or any of our members of the public to lose faith in the integrity of the Council.

To summarise:

You must not make any derogatory comments regarding our business, other employees, Management, our clients or members of the public, suppliers, or any other person, business or other entity in any way connected to our business. This applies whether or not it is on our equipment or your own and if communicated in works time or your own time.

You should also take care to limit who has access to view your comments or photographs etc on such sites. Alternatively, if your behaviour is deemed to have brought the council into disrepute, or caused any client, supplier, other business or any other entity connected to our business, to lose faith in the council's integrity, you will be liable to disciplinary action, which dependent upon the circumstances, could lead to your summary dismissal.

Adopted by Blaby Parish Council 14th July 2009 & Revised 12th July 2011
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