

St Ewe Parish Council

Website: www.st-ewe-pc.gov.uk

Email: clerk@st-ewe-pc.gov.uk

Information Technology Policy

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POLICY PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to set out the key Information Technology areas that are addressed. These areas ensure that both the Clerk and Parish Councillors follow best practices and maintain compliance with relevant standards and regulations in the operation of the Council's IT resources.

Topics Covered

- IT equipment, including computers, mobile phones, printers, and recording devices
- Passwords
- Email accounts and emails
- Parish Council Website
- Social media, such as a dedicated Facebook page
- Data Protection (GDPR)

Policy Context

This policy is tailored to the requirements of the small parish of St Ewe, which consists of one employee and ten parish council places of which 8 seats are filled.

Code of Conduct

The Clerk and Councillors are expected to comply with the Council's Code of Conduct when acting on behalf of St Ewe Parish Council, including when communicating by email.

IT EQUIPMENT

Provision of IT Equipment

The Council supplies the Clerk with all necessary computer hardware and software to carry out council business. This includes a portable laptop, Microsoft Office suite, antivirus protection, and access to cloud storage.

Purpose of Equipment

All IT equipment provided is strictly for Council-related activities and must not be used for personal purposes.

Council Mobile Phone

The Clerk is provided with a dedicated Council mobile phone, ensuring that Council communications are kept separate from personal calls and messages.

Recording Devices

Where necessary, the Council may provide a recording device to record meetings for the purpose of producing accurate minutes. Use of such devices is subject to approval and must comply with Parish Council Standing Orders regarding storage and usage of recordings.

Other Equipment

Additional equipment, such as a webcam, projector, or screen, may be provided if required, and will be used exclusively for Council business.

Purchasing Equipment

Councillors and the Clerk are not permitted to purchase computer or mobile equipment, including software, for Council purposes unless they have authorisation in line with the Council's Financial regulations.

Reporting Issues

Any loss, faults, or necessary repairs to Council equipment must be reported promptly to the Council.

Use of Personal Equipment

Councillors and staff who use their own computers, phones, or other IT devices for Council business must ensure these are protected by strong passwords.

Device Disposal and Leaving Council

Before disposing of any device containing Council work data, or when leaving the Council, councillors, staff, and authorised users must allow an IT contractor to access the device to remove all passwords and identifiable data or provide evidence that this process has been completed.

Responsibility for Personal Devices

Councillors, staff, and authorised personnel are responsible for understanding how their devices operate according to these rules when using personal IT equipment for Council business.

PASSWORDS

Password Security Requirements

All Council accounts must be protected by strong, secure passwords. Councillors and the Clerk are responsible for creating and maintaining secure passwords for their accounts. This approach helps ensure that passwords are both strong and easy to remember.

Changing Default Passwords

Default passwords provided by vendors or the IT provider must be changed immediately upon installation or setup.

Secure Storage of Passwords

Passwords for the Council's IT equipment and accounts must be stored securely.

Password Changes and Reporting

Passwords must be changed immediately if compromise is suspected. For Council accounts, a new copy of passwords must be provided as required.

EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Council Email Accounts

The Clerk is provided with a Council-domain email address: clerk@st-ewe-pc.gov.uk

Councillor Email Accounts

Councillors may be provided with Council-domain email addresses or may use their own email addresses for council business. This will be agreed with each Parish Councillor once they are appointed after an election.

Usage and Security of Email Addresses

All email addresses assigned to the Clerk and Councillors are to be used exclusively for Council business. These accounts must be secured with strong passwords.

Communication Protocols

The Clerk's email address is the primary method for contacting the Council. The Clerk does not communicate with individuals via social media but may post on social media platforms on behalf of the Parish Council. Typical posts include updates on meetings or information about road closures.

Official Status of Council Emails

All emails regarding Council business are considered official, regardless of whether they are sent to the Clerk or to a Councillor, and regardless of whether a .gov.uk or personal email address is used.

Council email addresses are governed by the Council's *Code of Conduct* and are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act*.

Email Usage Guidelines

- Use the assigned Council email address for all council business.
- Ensure that the subject line of each email accurately reflects the content of the message.
- Use 'reply all' only when it is appropriate to include all recipients in the response.
- Individual Councillors may communicate directly with parishioners regarding their own personal views.
- Councillors should copy the Clerk on any email relating to Council matters to ensure a complete and accurate record of correspondence is maintained.

Scam / Fraudulent Emails

Please ensure that emails you receive are genuine. Check who the sender is and ensure the email address is the person and not a fake email address disguised as a genuine supplier or contact.

Think before clicking on any links within the emails, as this may well be fraudulent and trying to capture information or bank details from you. Check the sender details, email address and company are genuine.

Please report any suspicious emails to: report@phishing.gov.uk

COUNCIL WEBSITE GUIDELINES

www.st-ewe-pc.gov.uk

The Council's website is dedicated exclusively to Council business. Content related to commercial businesses will not be included unless there is a direct connection to Council business.

The Clerk may also serve as the website manager and is, at a minimum, responsible for adding updates to the Parish Council website.

The Clerk must ensure that the website maintains accessibility in accordance with the current standard for Government websites (WCAG 2.2 AA).

The website will only include links to reputable websites and sources.

Each year, the Council confirms its commitment to comply with The Transparency Code for Smaller Councils 2014. The Clerk is responsible for ensuring that all information is required by the Transparency Code is published on the website.

SOCIAL MEDIA, TEXTS & NOTICEBOARDS

The Clerk is responsible for posting updates and information on the St Ewe Parish Council Website *Information* relevant to the community is shared through this platform.

The Clerk does not interact with Facebook users in the comments section, nor through Facebook Messenger or any other electronic messaging services.

The Clerk also refrains from using other social media platforms for Council business, unless specifically authorised by a decision of the Full Council.

The Clerk will not register or participate on any social media platform related to Council business without explicit approval from the Full Council.

Guidelines for Social Media, Text & Message Boards:

For the purposes of Council business, social media includes mobile phone message boards such as WhatsApp.

Councillors and staff should be conscious of whether they are using social media in an official Council capacity or as private individuals.

It is recommended to avoid discussing Council business on social media platforms.

All contributions should remain relevant to Council matters.

At all times, individuals must adhere to the *Code of Conduct* in their interactions through social media, text messages, and message boards.

DATA PROTECTION POLICY

The Council is accountable for the data it holds and will process data lawfully, fairly, accurately and transparently.

The Council will abide by the *Data Protection Act 2018* and UK GDPR *legislation*.

The Council is also advised regarding data protection by Cornwall Council, including Cornwall Association of Local Councils (CALC) and the Society of Local Council clerks (SLCC).

See the Council's other policies regarding the retention of personal data: its *Privacy Policy*.

GLOSSARY

TERM	DEFINITION
Member	A member is also known as a parish councillor or councillor who is elected to serve the local community.
Employee	A person who is employed by the local authority.
Contractor	A person(s) who undertakes work for a company but is not directly employed by them. They can work on specific jobs and projects as required by the company.
Clerk	A person employed to manage finance, administration, projects, policies and procedures and governance. This role can be quite extensive.
Volunteer	A person who freely offers their time to works with groups and committees on tasks or projects.
Committee	A group of people appointed for a specific function by a larger group and typically consisting of members of that group.
IT Equipment	A laptop, mobile phone, a printer, recording device, all of which may be purchased for the Clerk to carry out their role.
Email Accounts	Email accounts relate to the dedicated accounts for Parish Councillors where they conduct Parish Council business and not personal email accounts, unless a person's personal account is used as their means to communicate Parish Council business. This is clearly defined when a person becomes a Parish Councillor.
Data Protection	The regulations associated with Data Protection and how a council will process personal data, which is in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
Website	Refers to the Parish Council website: www.st-ewe-pc.gov.uk
Social media	Can relate to any pages on social media websites that are specifically managed and updated by the Parish Council, example Facebook.