

BUCKLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Internet, Email and Social Media Policy

Communication via email internet usage undertaken in the name of Buckley Town Council (the Council) or on Council Systems carry inherent risks such as:-

- Potential defamation.
- Spreading of viruses, including Trojans, which can steal data.
- Breach of confidentiality.
- Accepting files from sources in online chat rooms which could bypass firewalls or email filters.
- Breach of contract.
- Breach of copyright.
- Breach of data protection legislation.
- Breach of privacy and unlawful discrimination.

This Policy sets out the restrictive use of the Council's electronic equipment, namely, computers and telephones.

The Town Council reserves the right to monitor telephone, email and internet usage in accordance with the law, in particular the Data Protection Act 1998 (as and where superseded by the Data Protection Act 2018) and the Human Rights Act 1998.

The Council provides telephones, email and internet access solely for the purposes required for the performance and fulfilment of job responsibilities.

Occasional and reasonable personal use of the Council's telephone, internet and email service is permitted, provided that it does not interfere with work performance or security.

Monitoring and Privacy Issues

Internet and email usage may be monitored from time to time in order to identify potential breaches of this Policy. This may lead to formal disciplinary action. Employees should note that serious breaches may result in dismissal for gross misconduct. However, the Town Council is subject to Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998, this means that the Council will respect employees' private and family life.

Email Etiquette

All Staff and elected Councillors must follow the procedure outlined below when sending and receiving emails on behalf of the Council:-

- Only agreed email signatures may be used.
- All messages must use appropriate business language.
- A waiver clause will be included at the end of each email message.
- The circulating of offensive, indecent or obscene material or anything which breaches the Equal Opportunities Policy is strictly prohibited.
- Confidential material should not be disclosed.
- Only attachments from a trusted source may be downloaded.
- Ensure that the address of the recipient is correct before sending emails.
- Ensure that a 'reply to all' is appropriate.

- Ensure that essential files are saved before deleting the message in which they were received.

Telephone Etiquette

All Staff must follow the procedure outlined below when using the Council's telephones:-

- Answer calls by stating the name of the Council.
- Be polite at all times.
- Do not be rude or abrupt to callers.
- Do not use offensive language.
- Do not swear.
- Check the telephone frequently for messages from callers and respond in a timely manner.

Staff may make and receive personal calls as long as they are brief and infrequent. This applies to calls on the Council's land line or Staffs' personal mobile phones.

Unacceptable Behaviour on the Internet

Below are examples of what the Council deems to be unacceptable use or behaviour of Staff:-

- Allowing non-authorised users to access the internet using Staffs' log in or while logged on.
- Visiting internet sites that contain obscene, hateful, pornographic or other illegal material.
- Passing on such material to colleagues or external people.
- Using the computer to perpetrate any form of fraud or software containing 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 authorised areas.
- Publishing defamatory and/or knowingly false material about the Council, its employees, members, colleagues and/or customers on social networking sites, 'blogs' (online journals), 'wikis' and any online publishing format.
- Undertaking deliberate activities that waste staff effort or networked resources.
- Introducing any form of malicious software into the corporate network.
- Gambling on-line.
- Disclosure of any confidential corporate information without express consent.
- Any other area that the Council reasonably believes may cause problems.

Social Media

1. Policy Statement

1.1 This section of the Policy is intended to help Staff and elected Members make appropriate decisions about the use of social media such as social networking websites, forums, message boards, blogs or comments on web-articles such as Twitter, Facebook and/or LinkedIn.

1.2 This Policy outlines the standards the Council requires Staff and elected Members to observe when using social media. The circumstances in which the use of social media will be monitored and the action that will be taken in respect of breaches of this Policy.

2. The Scope of the Policy

2.1 All Staff and elected Members are expected to comply with this Policy at all times to protect the privacy, confidentiality and interests of the Council.

2.2 A breach of this Policy by Staff may be dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure and in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to summary dismissal.

2.3 Breach of this Policy by elected Members will be dealt with under the Code of Conduct.

3. Responsibility for Implementation of the Policy

3.1 The Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this Policy.

3.2 The Clerk is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this Policy and making recommendations for changes to minimise risks to the Council's work.

3.3 All Staff and elected Members should ensure that they take the time to read and understand this Policy. Any breach of this Policy should be reported to the Clerk or Town Mayor of the Council.

3.4 Questions regarding the content or application of this Policy should be directed to the Clerk.

4. Using Social Media Sites in the Name of the Council

4.1 The Clerk and Personal Assistants are permitted to post material on a social media website in the name of the Council and on its behalf in accordance with the rules and scope of this Policy.

4.2 If you are not sure if your comments are appropriate do not post them until you have checked with the Clerk.

5. Using Social Media

5.1 The Council recognises the importance of the internet in shaping public thinking about the Council and the support and services it provides to the community. It also recognises the importance of our Staff and elected Members joining in and helping shape community conversation and direction through interaction in social media.

a) Before using social media on any matter which might affect the interests of the Council you must have read and understood this Policy and;

b) Staff must have gained prior written approval to do so from the Clerk.

6. Rules of Use of Social Media

Whenever you are permitted to use social media in accordance with this Policy, you must adhere to the following general rules:-

6.1 Do not upload, post or forward a link to any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content.

6.2 Any member of Staff/elected Member who feels that they have been harassed or bullied or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague onto a social media website should inform the Clerk.

6.3 Staff/elected Member should never disclose commercially sensitive, personal, private or confidential information. If you are unsure whether the information you wish to share falls within one of these categories, you should discuss this with the Clerk or Town Mayor.

6.4 Staff/elected Members should not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent.

6.5 Before you include a link to a third party website, check that any terms and conditions of that website permit you to link to it.

6.6 When making use of any social media platform, Staff/elected Members must read and comply with its terms of use.

6.7 Staff/elected Members must be honest and open but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the Council.

6.8 Staff/elected Members are personally responsible for content they publish into social media tools.

6.9 Staff/elected Members should not escalate heated discussions. They should try to be conciliatory, respectful and quote facts to lower the temperature and correct misrepresentations.

6.10 Staff/elected Members should not discuss colleagues without their prior approval.

6.11 Staff/elected Members should always consider others' privacy and avoid discussing topics that may be inflammatory e.g. politics and religion. Remember that although it is acceptable to make political points or canvass votes via your own social media accounts this will not be permissible if you are commenting on behalf of the Council.

6.12 Staff/elected Members should avoid publishing their contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people who were not the intended recipients and never publish anyone else's contact details.

7. Monitoring Use of Social Media Websites

7.1 Staff/elected Members should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for Council purposes) may be monitored and where

breaches of this Policy are found, action may be taken against Staff under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure and Members under the Code of Conduct.

- 7.2 Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against Staff/elected Members and the Council.
- 7.3 In particular, a case of uploading, posting, forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, may amount to gross misconduct/breach of the Code of Conduct (this list is not exhaustive):
- a) pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);
 - b) a false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;
 - c) material which is offensive, obscene, criminal, discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment to the Council, its elected Members and Staff;
 - d) confidential information about the Council, any other organisation or individual(s);
 - e) any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil) for the Council, Staff or elected Members; or
 - f) material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person. Any such action will be addressed under the Disciplinary Procedure/Code of Conduct.
- 7.4 Where evidence of misuse is found the Council may undertake a more detailed investigation involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or Managers involved in the investigation. If necessary, such information may be handed to the Police in connection with a criminal investigation.
- 7.5 If Staff/elected Members notice any use of social media by other Staffs/elected Members in breach of this Policy please report it to the Clerk/Town Mayor.

8. Monitoring and Review of this Policy

- 8.1 The Council shall be responsible for reviewing this Policy annually to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

Further information for elected Members, published by the Welsh Local Government Association, on the use of social media can be viewed on the One Voice Wales website:- http://www.onevoicewales.org.uk/OVWeb/good_practicegeneral-8204.aspx

Adopted March 2019

MBW/TJR