

WESTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY POLICY

1. Introduction

Westhorpe Parish Council recognises the importance of effective and secure information technology (IT) and email usage in 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

This policy applies to all individuals who use Westhorpe Parish Council's IT resources, including computers, software, devices, data, and email accounts.

3. Acceptable use of IT resources and email

Westhorpe Parish Council's IT resources and email accounts are to be used for official council-related activities and tasks. Limited personal use is permitted, provided it does not interfere with work responsibilities or violate any part of this policy. All users must adhere to ethical standards, respect copyright and intellectual property rights, and avoid accessing inappropriate or offensive content.

4. Device and software usage

Where possible, authorised devices, software, and applications will be provided by Westhorpe 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 Westhorpe 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. Email communication

Email accounts provided by Westhorpe 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.

7. Password and account security

Westhorpe Parish Council users are responsible for maintaining the security of their accounts and passwords. Passwords should be strong and not shared with others. Regular password changes are encouraged to enhance security.

8. Mobile devices and remote work

Any mobile devices which may be from time to time provided by Westhorpe Parish Council should be secured with passcodes and/or biometric authentication. When working remotely, users should follow the same security practices as if they were in their usual place of work.

9. Email monitoring

Westhorpe 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.

10. Retention and archiving

Emails should be retained and archived in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements. Emails should be regularly reviewed and unnecessary emails should be deleted to maintain an organised inbox.

11. Reporting security incidents

All suspected security breaches or incidents must be reported immediately to the Chair/Clerk for investigation and resolution. Any email-related security incidents or breaches must be reported to the Chair/Clerk immediately.

12. Training and awareness

Westhorpe Parish Council will provide access to training and resources where necessary to educate users about IT security and best practices, privacy concerns, and technology updates. Employees and councillors will be provided with updates on email security and best practices.

13. Compliance and consequences

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

14. 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.

15. Contacts

For IT related enquiries or assistance, contact the clerk at:

clerk@westhorpeparishcouncil.gov.uk

All staff and councillors are responsible for the safety and security of Westhorpe Parish Council's IT and email systems. By adhering to this IT Policy, Westhorpe Parish Council aims to create a secure and efficient IT environment that supports its mission and goals.

Adopted at the Parish Council Meeting of 17th March 2026.

Next review due March 2027.