

**WITHIEL PARISH COUNCIL**

**IT Policy**

## Revision History

<b>Date</b>	<b>Section/Paragraph Changed</b>	<b>Reason for Change</b>
January 2026	Original document	Adopted by Withiel Parish Council at the Parish Council Meeting held on the 7 <sup>th</sup> January 2026

## **1. Introduction**

Withiel 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**

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

## **3. Acceptable use of IT resources and email**

Withiel Parish Council 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 Withiel 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 Withiel 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**

Withiel 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. Email communication**

Email accounts provided by Withiel 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.

Authority-owned email accounts must be used for official business. This ensures sensitive information is handled in a controlled environment with appropriate security measures. It provides a clear record of communications, which is essential for transparency and accountability. This helps maintain an audit trail and ensures all council-related communications are accessible for review if needed. It maintains a consistent and professional image for the authority and ensures all communications are easily identifiable as coming from the authority. This also makes Data Subject Access and Freedom of Information requests easier to manage.

Be cautious with attachments and links to avoid phishing and malware. Verify the source before opening any attachments or clicking on links.

## **8. Password and account security**

Withiel 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.

## **9. Mobile devices and remote Work**

Mobile devices provided by Withiel 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 the office.

## **10. Email monitoring**

Withiel 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. Retention and archiving**

Emails should be retained and archived in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements. 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 Parish Clerk for investigation and resolution. Report any email-related security incidents or breaches to the Parish Clerk immediately.

## **13. Training and awareness**

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

## **14. Council Property**

All hardware and software issued remains the property of Withiel Parish Council.

When using such equipment:

- you are responsible for all equipment and software until you return it. It will be insured by the Parish Council against loss and damage in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Council insurance but must be always kept secure.
- you are expected to take reasonable care of the equipment, and it should be returned in good, clean condition. When travelling it should not be left unattended. If left in a motor vehicle it should be locked in the boot out of sight.
- you are the only person authorised to use the equipment and software issued to you.

- if you discover any mechanical, electronic, or software defects or malfunctions, you should immediately bring such defects or malfunctions to the Council's attention.
- upon the request of the Council at any time, for any reason, you will immediately return any laptop, equipment and all software to the Council.

## **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. Related Polices**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the

<https://withielparishcouncil.org.uk/category/approved-annual-policy-documents/>

## **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**

Withiel Parish Council contracts the professional services of Town & Parish Council Websites, to provide IT services, including security, support, mailboxes, Microsoft licences, backups and advice. Employees experiencing technical issues should report these direct to the Town & Parish Council Websites support desk [enquiries@parish-council.website](mailto:enquiries@parish-council.website) or telephone 07938 455195/ 01453 756171 providing as much detail as possible. Council members experiencing technical difficulties should report these to the **Parish Clerk**.

**The Parish Clerk is the Data Controller.**

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