



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Information Technology Policy

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Based on Advice Note AG32/2004, Society of Local Council Clerks

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1. INTRODUCTION

The spread of electronic communications and access to multiple sources of information and access through the internet is an increasingly necessary part of the work for everyone. This accessibility confers advantages, but also brings risks that need to be taken into account. It is good practice for the sake of the employer and the employee to put in place a policy relating to the use of information technology mechanisms.

2. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Many workplaces allow staff personal use of information technology (IT), including email and the internet. Houghton Regis Town Council acknowledges that reasonable use of these technologies at work assists staff with their work-life balance by enabling them to make personal arrangements quickly and efficiently. However, it is necessary to prevent abuse of the system and protect IT equipment from malicious software. It is important to formalise this arrangement so that the employer and all employees have a clear understanding of what activities are and are not allowed.

As other users frequently require access to IT within the Council's building it is also important to ensure that the Council's IT system is protected from potential abuse by third parties.

3. POLICY COVERAGE

This policy applies to:

- Employees including staff, councillors, visitors etc
- Houghton Regis Town Council computer equipment including computers, tablets, laptops, mobile phones and Wi-Fi
- Volunteers using Houghton Regis Town Council computer equipment and Wi-Fi
- Members when using Houghton Regis Town Council computer equipment and Wi-Fi
- Members using social networking media in their capacity as Councillors

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Personal use of Houghton Regis Town Council computer equipment is permitted, but should be kept to a minimum during working hours. All computers used to send/receive emails, access the internet or access the Town Council's IT systems must have recognised up-to-date antivirus software installed. Employees/Members/Volunteers using Town Council equipment must not download files from the internet, email, memory stick or disc without implementing virus protection measures. All employees/Members/volunteers must report any virus problems immediately to their supervisor or IT contractor, as appropriate.

Houghton Regis Town Council Internet Usage:

- Browsing offensive or pornographic websites is prohibited.
- Pornographic or offensive material must not be downloaded from the internet.
- Indecent remarks, proposals or materials must not be posted on the internet.
- Malicious software (including logic bombs, Trojan horses, viruses and worms) must not be knowingly downloaded from the internet.
- Confidential information must not be posted on the internet.

Wireless Internet Access

Members of the public who hire rooms can also access the Town Council's wireless internet service. Hirers must agree to sign up to the following set of conditions before being given access to the internet:

- Browsing offensive or pornographic websites is prohibited.
- Pornographic or offensive material must not be downloaded from the internet.
- Indecent remarks, proposals or materials must not be posted on the internet.
- Malicious software (including logic bombs, Trojan horses, viruses and worms) must not be knowingly downloaded from the internet.

If using the Town Council's laptop, the antivirus must be enabled at all times.

Wireless internet access is controlled by a password which can be changed by Town Council officers at any time.

Email:

Employees/Members must not solicit, send or willingly receive emails of an obscene nature, or which are intended to annoy, harass, intimidate or cause offence to colleagues or members of the public.

Personal or sensitive data must not be sent via email unless agreement has been received from the individual concerned or this processing is necessary to carry out public functions.

Council officers should regularly delete or archive emails when they are no longer current or required in order to restrict the size of their mailboxes and reduce the risk of incoming emails being rejected.

Officers should be aware of the characteristics of spam and phishing emails and should not reply to these emails, but add the sender to their email system's Blocked Senders List.

Emails sent by employees must have one of the following disclaimers (as appropriate):

Please consider the environment and don't print this e-mail unless you really need to.

**** Any opinions expressed in this email are those of the individual and are not necessarily those of Houghton Regis Town Council.

This e-mail and any attachments hereto are strictly confidential and intended solely for the addressee. It may contain information which is privileged. If you are not the intended addressee, you must not disclose, forward, copy or take any action in reliance of this e-mail or attachments. If you have received this e-mail in error, please delete it and notify us as soon as possible to info@houghtonregis.org.uk

The anti-virus software used by Houghton Regis Town Council is updated regularly in an effort to minimise the possibility of viruses infecting our systems. However, you should be aware that there is no absolute guarantee that any files attached to this e-mail are virus free.***

Social Networking

Social networking media may be used by the Town Council as part of its means of communication with residents and service users. Such media will be used to represent the Council as a corporate body. Where members of the public are able to post to a social media page representing the Town Council, the pages will be monitored by Town Council officers to ensure that any offensive, inappropriate or discriminatory messages will be deleted.

Members who use social networking sites in their capacity as councillors must make it clear that they are speaking in a personal capacity and not representing the view of the Council. It is the responsibility of Members to ensure that they are adhering to the Council's Code of Conduct when using social networking sites.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY & DATA PROTECTION

Employees/Members must not reveal or publicise to a third party confidential or proprietary information, which includes, but is not limited to: personal or sensitive data as defined under Data Protection Legislation computer software source codes, logins, or passwords, unless they have the permission of the Town Clerk or it is in accordance with Data Protection Legislation.

Employees who have remote access to the Town Council's IT systems are responsible for ensuring that non-employees do not gain access to the systems. Houghton Regis Town Council respects the privacy and autonomy of its employees and Members.

6. MONITORING

Houghton Regis Town Council currently does not monitor the emails or internet usage of its officers. However, monitoring may be employed under the following circumstances:

- complaints are received about malicious emails
- evidence of criminal activity or sending/downloading pornographic images

- staff are spending unreasonable amounts of time visiting non-work-related internet sites or sending personal emails

Houghton Regis Town Council reserves the right to monitor activity on computer equipment. Any monitoring would comply with Data Protection Legislation and information obtained from monitoring would only be used for the purpose it was obtained.

7. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

If an employee breaches the IT policy, they will be subject to the Council's disciplinary procedures.

Breaches of the IT Policy by Members could contravene the Code of Conduct and action may result from this contravention.

8. POLICY REVIEW

Houghton Regis Town Council is committed to reviewing its policies and making improvements where possible. This policy will be reviewed every 4 years or as required by the Corporate Services Committee.