

# Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council

## Email and Website Policy

### 1. Introduction

1.1 Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council Email addresses, and the website of Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council (the Council) are to be used for the management and administration of the Council's business. The website has a broader roll as a resource for the local community and a means of encouraging Digital Inclusivity. The Council has made a bespoke email address available to members and at a meeting of the Parish Council in November 2016, it was agreed that the Clerk, the Chair and all Councillors will always adopt the bespoke Council email address.

### 2. Scope

2.1 This Policy applies to the Clerk and Councillors in respect of their use of the bespoke Council email address. No other email addresses, private or otherwise, are to be used directly or indirectly, for communication as a member of the Council.

2.2 This Policy also applies to the Clerk and Councillors in respect of their use of the Council's website.

### 3. Policy Statement

3.1 The Council encourages the effective use of email. Such use must always be lawful and must not compromise the Council's information and the Clerk's computer system. All users must ensure that their use of email will not adversely affect the Council or its business and not damage the Council's or its employees' reputations or otherwise violate any of the Council's policies.

### 4. Use of email facilities

4.1 The bespoke email addresses provided by the Council must be used in all communications relating to Parish Council business.

4.2 All users must use email responsibly. The Council reserves the right to take disciplinary or legal action against any person who fails to comply with this policy.

4.3 Use of the Council's email address is not secure or encrypted and care must be exercised when sending potentially sensitive or confidential information.

4.4 All users must accept and agree that communications both to and from the Council via email may be monitored for the purpose of ensuring appropriate use of this methodology. Users should also be aware that deleted emails may still be accessible from back-up procedures.

4.5 A member's email address will always take the following format:

[forename.familyname@winterbournestoke-pc.gov.uk](mailto:forename.familyname@winterbournestoke-pc.gov.uk)

4.6 The standard format for the signature on all Council emails is as follows, though

Councillors are able to include further contact details above the URL of the Parish Council Website.

REQUIRED TEXT:

<https://winterbournestoke-pc.gov.uk/>

*This email is intended solely for the individual or individuals to whom it is addressed, and may contain confidential and/or privileged material. If you are not the intended recipient you are notified that disclosing, copying, distributing or taking any action in reliance on the contents of this email is prohibited. If you receive this email in error, please contact the sender and delete the email from any computer. All email communication may be subject to recording and/or monitoring in accordance with internal policy and relevant legislation.*

*Any views expressed are those of the sender and, unless explicitly stated, do not necessarily represent the views of B Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council.*

*The Council cannot accept any liability for any loss or damage sustained as a result of software viruses. It is your responsibility to carry out such virus checking as is necessary.*

*Please consider your environmental responsibility. Before printing this email ask yourself: "**Do I need a hard copy?**"*

## 5. General Guidance

5.1 Email users are advised to be aware of the following:

- Messages sent to groups of people must be relevant to all concerned.
- Messages sent by email may not be seen by the recipient. If the message is urgent, an alternative method of contact should be used.
- The Council cannot be held responsible for damages, losses, expenses or claims that may be suffered by a user of this facility.

## 6. Business Use

6.1 The Clerk has the sole authority to purchase or acquire goods or services on behalf of the Council including by email.

6.2 Users are informed that email messages have the same status in law as written correspondence and are subject to the same legal implications, for example they may be required to be disclosed in Court.

6.3 Users are required to apply the same high standards to emails as those applied to written correspondence.

6.4 Email inboxes must be checked regularly to ensure all correspondence is assessed in a timely manner.

6.5 All users must comply with the relevant licence terms and conditions when copying and/or downloading material.

6.6 Users accept that there is no guarantee of delivery of emails unless acceptance of delivery is requested of the recipient.

6.7 All users must adopt the standard signature which is identified at Appendix B and must be included on every email sent using the Council's email address.

6.8 All users must comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 when placing personal data in messages or attachments.

## **7. Inappropriate Use**

7.1 The use of the Council's email address is allowed only for communication in respect of the Council's business. The use for personal communication is not allowed.

7.2 Email addresses other than those provided by the Council may not be used for Council business

7.2 Users must not use email to abuse or incite others or to harass or threaten any other person. It is not a defence to claim that an email to which this subsection refers was a response to abuse, harassment or threatening behaviour.

7.3 Recipients of abusive or threatening emails related to the business of the Council must immediately inform the Clerk or Chair.

7.4 The Council's email addresses may not be used to send, access, display, download, copy or circulate information containing stories, jokes or anecdotes that contain:

- pornography or sexually orientated images  
gambling
- gaming (playing computer games)
- promotion of unlawful discrimination of any kind
- promotion of racial or religious hatred
- threats including the promotion of violence
- fraudulent or illegal material promotion of illegal and/or unlawful acts
- information considered to be offensive, inappropriate or disrespectful to others
- unauthorised and copyrighted material including music.

7.5 Users must not send or disseminate proprietary data or any confidential information belonging to the Council to a third party unless authorised.

## **8. Accidental Access to Inappropriate material**

8.1 If inappropriate material is accessed accidentally on Council owned computer equipment, users must report this immediately to the Chair. It can then be taken into account as part of the Council's monitoring procedure.

## **9. The Council Website**

9.1 The Clerk, and/or a Nominee<sup>1</sup> of the Clerk, is responsible for liaising with the management company (NetWise) for updating the website, its development and continued adherence to current technological and transparency Code standards.

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<sup>1</sup> The Nominee may be a Councillor, or Parishioner, or other invitee, who can provide IT support to the Clerk.

9.2 Publicity or communication that promotes any matter subject to the business of the Council must only be undertaken in consultation with the Clerk or Chair.

9.3 Only the Clerk may add items specifically relating to Council business to the Website.

9.4 In the first instance, the Clerk, the Nominee, or the Chair will add material to the News, Events or Notices sections of the website on behalf of themselves, other Councillors and Parishioners. If other Councillors wish to have the facility to do this themselves, this will be permitted providing they can demonstrate the appropriate level of technical competence.

9.5 Parishioners who wish to add material to the website themselves and where this is agreed by the Council to be in the interests of the community, they may be permitted to do so:

- providing they can demonstrate the appropriate level of technical competence
- they agree to adhere to the terms of this policy.

9.6 Each Councillor will register with the website in order to engage in the Forum open to Councillors and Parishioners. The act of Registration will generate a password that must not be disclosed by the member to any third party and must be retained for the use of the individual member. Registration with the Forum is a pre-requisite of being allowed to input News, Events or Notices.

9.7 Councillors must register with the website using their bespoke Council email address. They must also ensure they use their own name as the display name on the website: e.g. Lesley Smith and must declare that they are commenting as a Councillor.

9.8 Councillors are also Parishioners and there are circumstances where they may wish to comment on an issue as a Parishioner rather than a Parish Councillor. To facilitate this, the Councillor should register with the website a second time, using a private email address. The Councillor, in common with any other Parishioner, must provide their real name when doing so, but may, like Parishioners, use an alias display name, to comment.

9.9 The Clerk will monitor all registrants on the website to ensure that only Parishioners are allowed to register. The Clerk is also charged with ensuring that all those Parishioners and Councillors who choose to use an alias display name provide their real names within 48 hours of registration, if not done at the time of registration.

9.3 Photographs of all Councillors and the Clerk will be displayed on the website, together with a brief biography. Additionally, the Clerk will display their email address.

## **10. Monitoring**

10.1 Serious breaches of this policy by a Council employee will amount to gross misconduct and may result in dismissal.

10.2 Serious breaches of this policy by councillors may result in action under the Councillor's Code of Conduct.

10.3 Failure to provide personal details when registering on the Council website, or within 48 hours, will result in the registrants account being blocked until such time as they identify themselves in writing

10.3 Any evidence of the use of impersonation (identity fraud) as a means of gaining access to the website will be passed to Wiltshire Police.

10.4 Any evidence of discrimination of any form, or trolling (making a deliberately offensive or provocative online posting with the aim of upsetting someone or eliciting an angry response from them) will be investigated and may result in a perpetrators account being blocked at the discretion of the Council

## 11. Responsible Officer

11.1 The Clerk will be responsible for the administration of this policy on behalf of the Council and will report breaches to the Chair of the Council for advice about further action.

Related Documents	

Adoption and Review History	
Adopted by Parish Council in:	December 2016
Reviewed in:	January 2020 December 2024
Next Review Due:	December 2027