

Martlesham Parish Council



IT Policy

Adopted:- 4th February 2026

Review by:- February 2027

Introduction

Martlesham Parish Council understands that the use of digital and electronic communication enables it to interact in a manner that improves the communications both within the Parish Council and between the Parish Council and the people, businesses and agencies it works with and serves.

The Parish Council has a website and uses email and social media (Facebook, Instagram & LinkedIn) to communicate. The Parish Council will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Should the Parish Council add to the channels of communication that it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers, this policy will be updated to reflect the new arrangements.

This policy outlines the guidelines and responsibilities for the appropriate use of IT resources and email by council members, employees, volunteers, and contractors.

Communication from the Parish Council – Business Use

Communications from the Parish Council are expected to meet the following criteria:

- Be civil, tasteful and relevant;
- Not contain content that is knowingly unlawful, libelous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- Not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which the Parish Council does not own the copyright;
- Not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details;
- If official council business, it will be moderated by the Clerk to the Parish Council as the Proper Officer.

When using email correspondence in respect to Parish Council Business, this should always be done using a dedicated Parish Council email, provided to all council officers and councillors (@martleshamcouncil.org.uk). Emails to the Parish Council become official and will be subject to The Freedom of Information Act. These procedures will ensure that a complete and proper record of all correspondence is kept.

Schedule 12 to the Local Government Act 1972 covers meetings and proceedings of local authorities. Previously, paragraph 4(2)(b) requires principal and parish councils to send summonses to attend meetings by post to their members' home addresses, or under 4(4), by post, to an alternative address specified. In practice, this covered all the papers to be considered at meetings, not just the agenda. The Government, under The Order made under Section 8 of the Electronic Communications Act 2000 amended Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972 to allow local authorities to send their members summonses to attend meetings, including agendas and related papers to meetings, electronically. The Parish Council has amended its own Standing Orders to allow the authorising of the use of electronic communication. Occasionally, the electronic communication may include attachments, such as a meeting agenda or papers, or a web-link enabling a parish councillor to view meeting papers. This communication will be made using the dedicated Parish Council email addresses.

As more and more information becomes available electronically, it is vital that all information is treated sensitively and securely. Parish Councillors are expected to maintain an awareness of the confidentiality of information that they have access to and not to share confidential information with anyone. Failure to properly observe confidentiality may be seen as a breach of the Parish Council's Code of Conduct and will be dealt with through its prescribed procedures (at the extreme it may also involve a criminal investigation).

Members should be careful only to cc essential recipients on emails and avoid use of the 'Reply to All' option (whilst ensuring that the people who need to know the information are copied in) and ensure that email trails have been removed.

Councillors and Officers may use SMS or other messaging programmes as a convenient way to communicate at times. All are reminded that this policy applies to such messages.

Device and software usage

Where possible, authorised devices, software, and applications will be provided by Martlesham Parish Council for work-related tasks.

However, where personal equipment are being used Councillors and Officers must ensure the security of the device being used.

Data management and security

All sensitive and confidential Martlesham 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.

Password and account security

Martlesham Parish Council users are responsible for maintaining the security of their accounts and passwords. Passwords should be strong and not shared with others. Longer passwords would allow for less regular password changes which would enhance security.

Mobile devices and remote Work

Mobile devices provided by Martlesham 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.

Email monitoring

Martlesham 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.

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.

Reporting security incidents

All suspected security breaches or incidents should be reported immediately to the designated IT point of contact for investigation and resolution. Report any email-related security incidents or breaches to the IT administrator immediately.

Training and awareness

Martlesham 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.

Compliance and consequences

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

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.

Contacts.

For IT-related enquiries or assistance, users can contact Martlesham Parish Council.

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