

Great Bealings Parish Council IT Policy

Adopted on 16th March 2026

1. Introduction

Great Bealings 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 Great Bealings Parish Council's IT resources, including computers, networks, software, devices, data, and email accounts. It also applies to the use of Councillors' personal devices, and the data stored on these.

3. Acceptable use of IT resources and email

Great Bealings Parish Council IT resources and email accounts are to be used for official council-related activities and tasks. Limited personal use of equipment 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. Parish Council email

The Parish Council has a dedicated email address (clerk@greatbealingsparishcouncil.gov.uk) The Clerk is responsible for dealing with email received and passing on any relevant mail to Councillors for information and/or action. All communications on behalf of the Council will usually come from the Clerk or Chairman and otherwise will be copied to the Clerk.

The Parish Council may not respond to every comment it receives particularly if the comment is for information purposes only.

5. Device and software usage

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

Unauthorised installation of software on authorised devices, including personal software, is strictly prohibited due to security concerns.

6. SMS (texting)

Councillors and the Clerk may use SMS as a convenient way to communicate at times. All are reminded that this policy also applies to such messages.

7. Data management and security

All sensitive and confidential 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.

8. Network and internet usage

Great Bealings 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.

9. Email communication

All Parish Councillors have a dedicated email address given to them once elected or co-opted onto the Council. These email accounts are for official communication only. Emails should be professional and respectful in tone. 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.

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

10. Password and account security

Great Bealings Parish Council users are responsible for maintaining the security of their accounts and passwords. Passwords should be strong and not shared with others, except the Clerk. Individual user's password for the .gov.uk email address was provided by the Clerk. If this is changed, the Clerk must be notified of the new password.

11. Mobile devices and remote Work

Mobile devices provided by Great Bealings 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.

12. Email monitoring

Great Bealings 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.

13. 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.

14. General Data Protection Awareness

Whilst Parish Councils are expected to comply with Data Protection legislation, individual Councillors will also need to ensure that they protect an individual's personal data whether it is stored electronically or as a hard copy. This applies only to living individuals (not the deceased, companies, other authorities and charities). Personal data includes: Names and addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses

15. Compliance and consequences

Councillors are required to implement the following agreed measures to comply with the legislation:

- Only use Great Bealings Parish Council email account for parish council correspondence
- Ensure that all devices (computers, laptops, phones) are password protected
- Not forward on emails or email threads that contain personal data

- Delete emails which are no longer required
- Ensure that their antivirus software and operating system is up-to-date
- Report all suspected security breaches or incidents to the Clerk immediately for investigation and resolution

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

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.

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