



# Lympstone Parish Council Email Usage Policy

The following policy was adopted and agreed by Lympstone Parish Council on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

## **Policy for Email Usage**

### **Guidelines**

The objective of these guidelines is to provide guidance to Councillors and the Parish Clerk ('the users') on the use of email so as to obtain the greatest benefit while keeping information safe.

The guidelines establish a framework for self-regulation by users of email as a communication and recording tool and are intended to minimise the risks associated with the handling of information. Such risks include loss of information, the safety and privacy of users, damage to the Council's reputation, loss of public trust and penalties for failing to meet legal obligations. It should be noted that emails and attachments may need to be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act.

Email is one of the safest and fastest ways of sharing and disseminating information. It is assumed that all users take appropriate measures to keep their personal emails and data secure and that they will apply similar safeguards to Council business.

Lympstone Parish Council does not provide or insist Councillors use an exclusive email address for Council business, however it is generally considered best practice to do so and Councillors are encouraged to have a designated email address for Parish Council business.

Parish Councillors must consent in writing to agree to receive all council correspondence via email (using the form attached). This must be signed annually at the first parish council meeting of the municipal year. A Parish Councillor must also put in writing if they do wish to receive Parish Council correspondence via email.

### **General guidelines**

- (a) E-mails should not be used as a deliberate means of avoiding personal contact where one face to face discussion can avoid an exchange of numerous e-mails.
- (b) Limit the number of copies to those that are necessary.
- (c) Do not unnecessarily broadcast information widely, constant bombardment of individuals by irrelevant or unsolicited e-mail is time wasting.
- (d) E-mails should be checked regularly or where this is not possible arrangements should be made for redirection

(e) If an email requires a response reply promptly. Where a prompt, detailed, response is not possible, send a short e-mail acknowledging receipt and giving an estimate of when you will provide a detailed response.

(f) If the sender of an email indicates that a response to them is not required this should be respected – this does not preclude recipients from responding to each other.

(g) Do not unnecessarily print out and store hard copies of e-mails. SPC policy email usage

(h) Do not either write in capitals as this can be perceived as shouting or adopt a more aggressive tone in e-mails than you would in a face to face discussion. Abide by the Councils corporate standards for written communication.

(i) E-mail and the Internet provide an immense and unprecedented way to communicate council messages. It is important to maintain clarity, consistency and integrity of the Council's corporate image and policy.

(j) Do not attach long files or include graphics and logos if this is not necessary.

(k) Members should regularly delete or archive files no longer required or needed for immediate access.

(l) Summary checklist

- Is e-mail the best way to communicate this message?
- Think before you write.
- Use the spell check facility
- Think before you print.
- Be aware of the General Data Protection Regulations and do not copy people in without due care of the regulations. Only copy in people who you would be prepared to talk to about the subject.
- Re-read before you send.
- Delete or electronically file/archive e-mail as soon as it is dealt with.

### **Guidelines for Officers of the Council**

1. For officers of the Council - Clerk, Chair, and Vice-Chair - to provide continuity separate email addresses have been provided exclusively for Council Business. All Parish Councillors will receive their own tablet and be provided with a PC email which will be expected to be used.

2. Additionally (where appropriate), each machine used for Council business must have anti-malware software installed and it must be ensured that virus definition files are up to date and regular full scans are run. Assurance that machines are protected should be provided to the Parish Clerk.

3. Emails sent to a private email address of an officer should first be forwarded to their Council address and the response sent from there with a note asking that the Council address is noted by the sender for future communications.

4. Emails sent from accounts held by Council Officers must be "signed" with a disclaimer, classification and note expressing that the email is from an Officer of the Parish Council. The Clerk's disclaimer should state 'sent on behalf of the Council or Councillors' as appropriate.

The disclaimer wording used is:-

Email disclaimer: <http://www.lympstone.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Web-email-disclosure.pdf>

#### **DISCLAIMER**

*This message is intended only for the use of the person(s) ("Intended Recipient") to whom it is addressed. It may contain information, which is privileged and confidential. Accordingly any dissemination, distribution, copying or other use of this message or any of its content by any person other than the Intended Recipient may constitute a breach of civil or criminal law and is strictly prohibited. If you are not the Intended Recipient, please contact the sender as soon as possible.*

NB: By clicking on the link in the email disclaimer will bring the user to the following:

*Lympstone Parish Council PARISH COUNCIL*

*General Data Protection Regulation 2018*

*Email disclosure*

*This page is reached by clicking on the email disclaimer link at the end of a Lympstone Parish Council email.*

*All emails may be subject to recording and/or monitoring in accordance with relevant legislation. Councillor emails are sent in an individual capacity and are not written on behalf of Lympstone Parish Council.*

*Addressee*

*The email you have received (including attachments) is private and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom it is addressed. If you intend to forward the email or otherwise distribute it to anyone else please ensure that you have removed all personal information from the message before forwarding.*

*If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the Council of the error in transmission and delete the email from your system. You must not print, copy or distribute it.*

*Nothing in this email message amounts to a contractual or other legal commitment on the part of Lympstone Parish Council unless confirmed by a communication signed on behalf of the Council.*

*Confidentiality*

*The information in this message is confidential and may be legally privileged. It is intended solely for the addressee. Access to this message by anyone else is unauthorized. If you are not the intended recipient, any disclosure, copying, or distribution of the message, or any action or omission taken by you in reliance on it, is prohibited and may be unlawful. Please immediately contact the sender if you have received this message in error.*

*Last updated 5th April 2018*

5. Passwords for Officers and all Parish Councillor email accounts should be held securely by the Clerk. A note shall be made of the Password(s) which shall be handed to and retained by the Parish Clerk in a sealed dated envelope. This envelope may not be opened other than in the presence of two Councillors. After the envelope has

been opened the Password(s) shall be changed as soon as practicable. The fact that the enveloped has been opened shall be reported to the next meeting of the Council. In the event of a user being unable to access and respond to emails for an extended period of time a temporary password may be used by whoever deputises for the period of absence. This must be changed immediately the user returns.

*Lucy Tyrrell, Clerk and RFO to Lympstone Parish Council*

**Date of next review:        February 2024**

**Lympstone Parish Councillor Consent Form to receive Emails:**

To the Clerk,

I consent to receive all Parish Council correspondence via email.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_