WOLLASTON PARISH COUNCIL
EMAIL AND USE OF THE INTERNET POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Email is regularly used for the management and administration of the business of Wollaston Parish Council.

2.0 SCOPE

This Policy applies to:

- employees
- elected members (councillors)
- members of the public
- other people, companies and organisations in contact with Wollaston Parish Council.

3.0 POLICY STATEMENT

Wollaston Parish 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.

4.0 USE OF EMAIL FACILITIES

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

All users must accept that communications via the Clerk's email system is not secure or encrypted and they should take particular care when sending potentially sensitive or confidential information.

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.

5.0 GENERAL GUIDANCE

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 this method are not necessarily seen by the recipient within the current week. If the message is urgent, an alternative method of contact should be used
- Wollaston Parish Council cannot be held responsible for damages, losses, expenses, demands and/or claims that may be suffered by a user of this facility
- The Clerk may, from time to time, choose to operate a filtering system in order to monitor offensive or clearly inappropriate material and may quarantine any messages in that category.

6.0 BUSINESS USE

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

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

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

Email inboxes must be checked regularly to ascertain all correspondence within that system.

Discovery of an email which claims to contain a virus, or a solution to correct a previously transmitted virus, must be reported immediately to the Clerk.

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

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

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.

7.0 INAPPROPRIATE USE

Users must not use email to abuse or inflame others or to harass or threaten anyone. Responding to abuse, harassment or threatening will not be accepted as an excuse for inappropriate language and/or behaviour.

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

Users must not send emails containing obscene, abusive or profane language.

Users must not 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.

Wollaston Parish Council will report to the police all known incidents in which users intentionally send or receive emails containing the following:

- images of child pornography or child abuse (i.e. images where children are or appear to be under the age of 16 and are involved in sexual activities or posed to be sexually provocative)
- adult material/pornography that breaches the Obscene Publications Acts (1959 & 1964)
- criminally racist material
- Users must not send, receive or disseminate proprietary data or any confidential information belonging to Wollaston Parish Council to or from a third party unless authorised.

8.0 ACCIDENTAL ACCESS TO INAPPROPRIATE MATERIAL

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

9.0 MONITORING

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

Serious breaches of this policy by councillors, members of the public or members of any other organisation or company will result in legal or police action.

10.0 RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

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

Signed ……..
Chair, Wollaston Parish Council

Date:…….

Reviewed April 2026
Next Review April 2028