



IT POLICY

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Town Council Equipment

You may be given access to, or use of Town Council IT equipment, such as a laptop, tablet or mobile phone. If you are using Town Council equipment away from our offices, you are expected to:

- Take good care of the equipment.
- Use the equipment only in accordance with the policy/guidelines below.
- Return it to our offices when not required.
- Not to install 'apps' or other software without authority.

In the case of mobile phones, the Town Council does not expect you to make / receive calls whilst driving. You must therefore not make or receive calls, send or read text messages whilst driving, unless you have "hands-free" equipment fitted. Even if you do have such equipment fitted, you must still ensure that it is safe for you to make / receive a call. A breach of this rule might be considered as grounds for disciplinary action.

You should remember that using a mobile phone whilst driving is a road traffic offence and you may be subject to action by the police.

Appropriate use of E-mail

As a public body, Neston Town Council is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This means that any communication you make in the course of your work could become public.

In order to present a professional image of the Council, you should follow the standards below when using our e-mail systems:

- a) Council e-mail should only be used for work-related matters, not communications of a personal nature.
- b) You should avoid making negative, critical, or derogatory comments about individuals or organisations. If you are experiencing difficulties with a specific individual, you must speak to your Line Manager rather than attempting to solve matters yourself.

- c) Whilst the style of e-mails is often less formal and more "chatty" than a letter, you should not be including overly personal or light hearted comments, slang or swear words, or discuss non-work matters within a work e-mail.
- d) You should avoid the use of "emojis" / "smilies" in work e-mails. You should also observe other standard e-mail conventions (e.g. not using all capital letters, which is considered as "shouting").
- e) You should always use Neston Town Council's email template when sending emails to outside organisations or to companies as appropriate.
- f) You should not circulate "joke" or "spam" e-mails.
- g) You must scan any attachment to an e-mail (especially if it is unsolicited) for viruses or other malicious programs before opening it. This will typically be done automatically by the security software installed on the Council's IT devices.
- h) Under no account should you by-pass the security software to open a file ending in ".exe", ".ps1" or ".bat" as these are common ways of transmitting malicious programs. If you are unsure, check with your Line Manager who can refer the email and its contents to the Council's IT Consultant.
- i) You should be aware of the usage of email by malicious individuals and organisations in attempting "phishing" and "spear-phishing" scams. These typically can involve convincing looking emails from colleagues, suppliers or other organisations requesting certain actions. If in doubt contact the person concerned via another method or check with your Line Manager who can refer the email and its contents to the Council's IT Consultant.
- j) You should remember that managers or work colleagues might need to access your work e-mail for legitimate work reasons. As such, you can have no expectation of privacy of the content of your work emails.

The three general principles to follow are:

- Use the same standards within an e-mail as you would in any other written communication.
- Anything you say in an e-mail could become public – you should have no expectation of privacy.
- If an incoming email contains an attachment or a URL website link which was unexpected or the attachment / website link is unusual in any way it is best to avoid opening the attachment or clicking on the website link. Also check with your Line Manager who can refer the email and its contents to the Council's IT Consultant.

A failure to follow these standards might result in disciplinary action being taken against you. If the circumstances are serious, it could be considered gross misconduct and lead to your dismissal.

Appropriate Use of the Internet

You are given internet access primarily to facilitate research for work. However, limited personal use of the internet is acceptable, provided that such use is restricted to break or quiet periods and does not affect your work performance. The Council can and does monitor internet usage and inappropriate or excessive personal use of the

internet might lead to disciplinary action. In certain cases, it might be considered gross misconduct and lead to your dismissal.

The following activities are considered inappropriate use of the Town Council's Internet and Computer facilities:

- a) Accessing or downloading **the content** of pornographic sites (whether legal or not in the UK).
- b) Accessing of sites relating to activities illegal in the UK.
- c) Accessing of sites promoting violence, racial hatred or extreme political views
- d) Using your work e-mail address to register **for non-work related websites**.
- e) Using Council Internet facilities to undertake non-work-related activities, for example selling or promoting merchandise or services, promoting membership in non-business related organisations, promoting personal or political causes etc.
- f) Downloading or installing non-work-related files **or software** (for example music mp3s or videos) onto Council computers.
- g) Downloading or otherwise installing programs that are not related to work matters (e.g. games).
- h) Downloading programs or agreeing to licences without authority.
- i) **Downloading non-work data or files, which may contain viruses or other potentially malicious programs from known dubious unsafe sources such as peer-2-peer (p2p) file sharing networks or servers onto Council computers.**
- j) Entering into contracts or other legally binding agreements online without authority.

Appropriate use of Social Media

The Council uses social media to inform residents of the Council and **provide updates** on its events/activities, and you are given access to this (for example being able to enter updates to a Council's **Twitter / X feed**). **You** must only use this for the purposes it has been established for, not for any personal views or messages. If in doubt as to the content/tone of a message you should seek advice from your Line Manager or the Chief Officer prior to posting.

Outside work, the Council generally has no interest in your online activities. However, you should be aware that if we find any evidence that you are using internet services such as chat rooms, message boards, forums, blogs or social networking (e.g. Facebook / **Twitter / X**) sites to:

- a) Post comments which appear to represent the view of the Council.
- b) Post negative or derogatory comments about the Council or individuals associated with it (it does not matter if the Council or the individuals are not named if there are other ways in which they might be identified).
- c) Bully or harass individuals connected to the Council.

We would consider this to be unacceptable and we may consider it grounds for disciplinary action.

You should also be careful not to “blur” personal and professional boundaries – please consider carefully whether you wish to add a work colleague to a personal account (e.g. as a “Facebook friend”). You should also remember that comments made on such sites can be widely transmitted outside of your control. You may wish to review your privacy settings to limit the possibility of this happening.