

# IT and Internet Policy

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## Background

### Policy

## Ripley Town Council

### IT and Internet Policy

The Town Council reserves the right to access and monitor any or all areas of any computer and computer software systems which it owns (including email boxes and messages) from time to time for business reasons and training purposes. You should not therefore assume that any information held on the computer within the [ripleytowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:ripleytowncouncil.gov.uk) email address is private and confidential to you.

### Email

Your email address given by the Town Council will be password protected, however, can receive emails from anyone connected to the Internet. Used correctly it is a facility that is of assistance to all. Inappropriate use however may cause many problems including distractions, distress to others, time wasting and legal claims. This policy sets out the Town Council's position on the correct use of the [ripleytowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:ripleytowncouncil.gov.uk) e-Mails which should be used for Town Council business only.

You should ensure that your correspondents know that they should not send you "humorous" or illegal attachments such as pictures or executable programs. Personal emails should not be dealt with using the [ripleytowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:ripleytowncouncil.gov.uk) email address. All external non-work-related email messages should be deleted on receipt. Anyone found with offensive or pornographic material on his or her computer will be subject to investigation, which could result in being reported to the Monitoring Officer.

If you receive an email from an unknown source, or "junk" email you should delete this from your system immediately without opening it as it may contain a virus.

Emails may contain file attachments. These should not be opened unless they are received from a trusted source, i.e. from another known Town Council, employee or representative.

Email contacts should be restricted to Town Council business. Confidential information about or relating to the business of the Town Council, its customers, suppliers or contacts should not be transmitted outside the Town Council via email. You should ensure there is no infringement of copyright when adding attachments to emails. Confidential information should not be shared to anyone outside the Town Council.

You should be aware that deleted emails will remain held on the system for some time and will be accessible from back up if required for investigation of complaints of systems abuse.

You must not distribute sensitive commercial data concerning the Town Council to competitive sources. Doing so may result in disciplinary action leading to being reported to the Monitoring Officer.

## Guidance for appropriate use

Email is a non-secure medium and care should be taken when composing, sending and storing messages. Email should be regarded in the same way as any other business communication and should be treated as a Town Council record. You should adopt a style and content for email. It is recommended that you adopt the same standards for email as for letters and memos, although the style may be more informal.

Confidential information about or relating to the business of the Town Council, its customers, prospects, suppliers or contacts should not be transmitted outside the Town Council via email unless done so in the course of business and sufficient steps are taken to safeguard security.

Employees must take reasonable steps to guard against unauthorised access to, alteration, accidental loss, disclosure or destruction of data.

## Inappropriate use

You must not send internally or externally or obtain material (whether in the form of text or images) which is libellous or defamatory, illegal, obscene, sexually explicit, bullying, discriminatory or disparaging of others particularly in respect of their race, national origins, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious or political beliefs.

You are reminded that material that you find acceptable might be offensive to others. It is recommended that you take care and give sufficient thought to what you send. Messages can be misconstrued and should not become a substitute for "one to one" conversations. You should not send humorous material to business contacts. It can frequently be misunderstood or cause offence. In particular, the Town Council recommends that criticisms or complaints are not dealt with by email.

Examples of inappropriate use include, but are not limited to:

- Sending, receiving, downloading or displaying or disseminating material that insults causes offence or harasses others.
- Accessing pornographic, racist or other inappropriate or unlawful material.
- Engaging in on-line chat rooms, on-line gambling sites, social networking sites or blogging.
- Forwarding electronic chain letters or similar material.
- Downloading or disseminating copyright materials.
- Transmitting confidential information about the Town Council or its customers externally and not in the course of the Town Council's business.

- Downloading or playing computer games.
- Copying or downloading software.

Serious instances of inappropriate use may be considered gross misconduct and lead to dismissal.

## Internet access

Internet access is granted for business reasons only during working hours. Usage is limited to work related activities. The availability and variety of information on the Internet has meant that it can be used to obtain material considered to be offensive. Anyone found to have used the Internet to access and/or distribute any kind of offensive material, or non-related employment issues, are liable to disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal.

Under no circumstances must users download files without the consent of the Town Council /Clerk.

If you wish to use the Internet out of office hours for personal purposes, please contact the Clerk of the Town Council who will be able to grant you access and explain how to use this facility, if appropriate.

Anyone believed to have been visiting pornographic sites, downloading or circulating pornographic material will be subject to disciplinary action. Offences of this nature may be considered gross misconduct and lead to dismissal, and if necessary, the police will be informed.

Please note that the main servers maintain a record of Internet access by user and these will be monitored as necessary and results forwarded to the Town Council and the police, if appropriate.

## Unauthorised Use of Internet, Email and Social Networking Sites

- Unauthorised or inappropriate use of the Internet, email and Social Networking Sites may result in formal disciplinary action which could include dismissal.
- The Town Council will not tolerate the use of email, internet or any Social Networking Site by Employees for unofficial or inappropriate purposes, including: -
  - Any messages produced by Employees, either during or outside of normal working hours that could constitute bullying, harassment or other detriment to colleagues, our business or anyone associated with the business.
  - Personal use during working hours (e.g. social invitations, private messages, jokes, cartoons, chain letters or other private matters).
  - On-line gambling.
  - Accessing or transmitting pornography.

- Transmitting copyright information and/or any software available to the user.
- Posting confidential information about other Employees, the Town Council or its customers or suppliers.
- Posting any comments, opinions, views or remarks, either during or outside of normal working hours, which could be considered detrimental to the Town Council, its Employees, customers, suppliers or anyone else connected to the business, or bring the Town Council into disrepute.

## Responsibilities

All Users are expected to act in a manner that will not cause damage to IT facilities or disrupt IT services. Any accidental damage or disruption must be reported to Management as soon as possible after the incident has occurred. Users are responsible for any IT activity which is initiated under their username.

## Good Practice

- The Town Council has good practice guidelines for dealing with email when staff are out of the office for longer than three days. When activating the "out of office" facility messages should name an alternative member of staff for correspondents to contact if necessary. This will ensure that any important messages are picked up and dealt with within required timescales.
- During periods of absence when highly important emails are anticipated, the Employee (or Manager) should make arrangements for notification and access by another appropriate member of staff.
- Where sensitive and confidential information needs to be sent via email for practical reasons, please be aware that email is essentially a non-confidential means of communication. Emails can easily be forwarded or archived without the original sender's knowledge. They may be read by persons other than those they are intended for.
- Users must exercise due care when writing emails to avoid being rude or unnecessarily terse. Emails sent from the Town Council may be interpreted by others as Town Council statements. Users are responsible for ensuring that their content and tone is appropriate. Emails often need to be as formal and business like as other forms of written correspondence.
- Users should delete all personal emails and attachments when they have been read and should also delete all unsolicited junk mail. In the process of archiving emails, users should ensure inappropriate material is not archived
- The Town Council provides a current and up to date automatic virus checker on all networked computers. However, caution should be used when opening

any attachments or emails from unknown senders. Users must best endeavour to ensure that any file downloaded from the internet is done so from a reliable source. It is a disciplinary offence to disable the virus checker.

**Please note, breaching these procedures will constitute an act of Gross Misconduct. Consequently, anyone who is accused of breaching these procedures will be subjected to a Formal Disciplinary Investigation and may be dismissed if found guilty.**