Cowling Parish Council
Email policy

Cowling Parish Council recognises email as a valuable communications tool that adds to other communication channels and encourages its use by elected members and staff.

It provides email addresses for the use of Councillors and staff. It does not provide computer equipment but will consider requests by Councillors for assistance in training in use of new technology.

Purpose and Use of Parish Council email addresses.

1. A parish council e-mail address is expressly for the purpose of supporting the Council's business activities.
   - Under no circumstances should the service be used to operate or support a business or private venture.
   - Under no circumstances should the service be used for any purpose that may be considered illegal or mischievous.
2. The Parish Council e-mail may not be used for transmitting, retrieving or storing any communication of a discriminatory or harassing nature or materials that are offensive, obscene, pornographic or sexually explicit. Users must not use or transmit abusive, profane or offensive language
3. The Parish Council reserves the right to use software to monitor and control access to undesirable content.
4. Accounts will be disabled for staff and Councillors leaving the Council.

Using email effectively

1. Do not assume privacy for any Internet communications of any kind. E-mails and/or files can be posted or forwarded to other Internet users around the world without the user's knowledge or permission.
2. Defamatory, libellous, abusive, sexist or racist comments in e-mail may render the sender personally liable to civil action.
3. Any messages or information sent by an Employee or Member are statements that reflect the Council. All Users should be aware that their views will be construed as representing the Council. Users should include a disclaimer with their email stating that 'the views expressed are personal and may not necessarily reflect those of the Parish Council, unless explicitly stated otherwise. Members using their private or business email addresses should clearly distinguish Parish Council emails from their own emails when corresponding with third parties on behalf of the Parish Council. Guidance on creation of standard electronic signatures can be provided. It should be noted that a disclaimer does not legally divorce the legal connection between the sender and the Council.

4. The following procedures are recommended practice:-

DO:

- **Consider whether e-mail is the best way to send a message;**

  - Messages may not be secure.
  - Messages may not be read immediately.
  - Don't assume that they have been read! messages may be produced as proof that you said something.
  - Messages may be held to be legally binding.
  - Messages may be subject to tampering after delivery or sending. Messages can be edited!
  - Messages may continue to exist after you think you have deleted them. Never assume that deleted items can't be retrieved!

- **Apply the same principles you would use with a printed memo;**
  Content should be clear and not open to misinterpretation. Use plain English

Include a meaningful and logical subject line. If the recipient is not expecting the e-mail and does not recognise the subject of the data they may delete it. Always ring the recipient if they are not expecting something unusual.

Include your position and contact details the first time you correspond. Use standard fonts and effects to ensure legibility.

Only copy to those who need a copy.

If you are transmitting sensitive data, send it in a password protected document.

- Make it clear to recipients why you are sending an email, especially circular emails

  Is it for information only, or do you expect a reply?

  Is it a request for a specific piece of information, or are you seeking opinion?

- Check incoming mail regularly and respond promptly;

- Do not save attachments in your email file. Save them to a logical location in your work area.

DON'T

- Use e-mail to avoid difficult face-to-face communication.
- Use email for dialogue which would better be held in meetings or get into "tit for tat" interchanges.
- Use e-mail to send confidential information. If you have to use email send your correspondence in an attached word file with password protection.
- Use e-mail to send personal information without authorisation.
- Send messages that may be read as obscene, harassing, intimidating or discriminatory.
- Send messages in anger, even in response to abusive mail.
- Send messages in CAPITALS – it may be interpreted as shouting.
- Send messages to "everyone" or "reply all" without checking whether it is relevant and appropriate to do so.
- Forward or respond to junk mail, chain letters, virus hoaxes etc

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Chairman ……

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