Cowling Parish Council IT Policy

Adopted: 02 Feb 2025

Date for Review: 20 April 2026

History Page		
Version	**Brief description of changes**	**Date Approved**
NALC adopted.	Adopted NALC IT and modified to reflect Cowling Parish Council processes.	**02 Feb 2025**
1	Reviewed: Minor Changes throughout the document. Addition of 'WhatsApp' reference.	**20 April 2026**

Cowling Parish Council

IT Policy

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1. Introduction

Cowling parish council recognises the importance of effective and secure information technology (IT) and email usage in supporting its business, operations, and communications.

This policy outlines the guidelines and responsibilities for the appropriate use of IT resources and email by council members, employees, volunteers, and contractors.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals who use Cowling parish council's IT resources, including computers, networks, software, devices, data, and email accounts.

3. Acceptable use of IT resources and email

Cowling parish council IT resources and email accounts are to be used for official council-related activities and tasks. Limited personal use is permitted, provided it does not interfere with work responsibilities or violate any part of this policy. All users must adhere to ethical standards, respect copyright and intellectual property rights, and avoid accessing inappropriate or offensive content.

The application 'WhatsApp' may be used to communicate with all the Parish Councillors and Clerk. This a private group and cannot be accessed by the public. The Clerk is the administrator of the group.

4. Device and software usage

Where possible, authorised devices, software, and applications will be provided by Cowling parish council for work-related tasks.

Unauthorised installation of software on authorised devices, including personal software, is strictly prohibited due to security concerns.

5. Data management and security

All sensitive and confidential Cowling parish council data should be stored and transmitted securely using approved methods. Regular data backups should be performed to prevent data loss, and secure data destruction methods should be used when necessary.

6. Network and internet usage

Cowling parish council's network and internet connections should be used responsibly and efficiently for official purposes. Downloading and sharing copyrighted material without proper authorisation is prohibited.

7. Email communication

Email accounts provided by Cowling parish council are for official communication only. Emails should be professional and respectful in tone. Confidential or sensitive information must not be sent via email unless it is encrypted.

Be cautious with attachments and links to avoid phishing and malware. Verify the source before opening any attachments or clicking on links.

8. Password and account security

Cowling parish council users are responsible for maintaining the security of their accounts and passwords. Passwords should be strong and not shared with others. Regular password changes are encouraged to enhance security.

9. Mobile devices and remote Work

Mobile devices provided by Cowling parish council should be secured with passcodes and/or biometric authentication. When working remotely, users should follow the same security practices as if they were in the office.

10. Email monitoring

Cowling parish council reserves the right to monitor email communications to ensure compliance with this policy and relevant laws. Monitoring will be conducted in accordance with the Data Protection Act and GDPR.

11. Retention and archiving

Emails should be retained and archived in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements. Regularly review and delete unnecessary emails to maintain an organised inbox.

12. Reporting security incidents

All suspected security breaches or incidents should be reported immediately to the designated IT point of contact for investigation and resolution. Report any email-related security incidents or breaches to the IT administrator immediately.

13 Training and awareness

Cowling parish council will provide regular training and resources to educate users about IT security best practices, privacy concerns, and technology updates. All employees and councillors will receive regular training on email security and best practices.

14. Compliance and consequences

Breach of this IT and Email Policy may result in the suspension of IT privileges and further consequences as deemed appropriate.

15. Policy review

15. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Updates may be made to address emerging technology trends and security measures.

16. Contacts

For IT-related enquiries or assistance, users can contact the Clerk at Cowling Parish Council at clerk@cowlingparishcouncil.org.uk or James Lungley at james@parishcouncilwebsites.co.uk

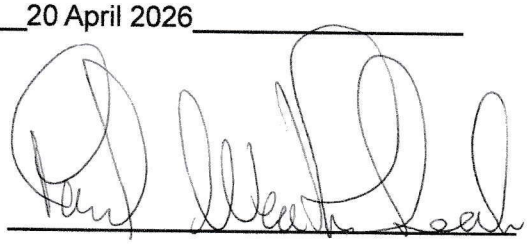
All staff and councillors are responsible for the safety and security of Cowling parish council's IT and email systems. By adhering to this IT and Email Policy, Cowling parish council aims to create a secure and efficient IT environment that supports its mission and goals.

Date: _____20 April 2026_____

Signature: L. A. Whitehead

Role: _____Clerk/RFO and Proper Officer_____

Date: _____20 April 2026_____

Signature: 

Role: _____Chairman of Cowling Parish Council_

(Source:) 2025 Practitioners Guide