

## Holt Parish Council

### IT Policy

#### **1. Introduction**

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

This policy outlines the guidelines and responsibilities for the appropriate use of IT resources and email by Councillors and the Clerk.

#### **2. Scope**

This policy applies to the Clerk and Councillors who use Holt parish council's IT resources, including computers, networks, software, devices, data, email accounts and WhatsApp.

#### **3. Acceptable use of IT resources and email**

Holt Parish Council IT resources, email accounts and WhatsApp 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.

#### **4. Device and software usage**

Where possible, authorised devices, software, and applications will be provided by Holt 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 Holt 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**

Holt 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 & WhatsApp communication**

Email & WhatsApp accounts provided by Holt parish council are for official communication only and should be professional and respectful in tone. Confidential or sensitive information must not be sent via email unless it is encrypted. Residents who have given their permission in writing only (email) for their details to be stored by the Parish Council to facilitate communication via the HOLT Together WhatsApp group and E-network will be included in the circulation and removed upon request in writing. The Clerk is the sole administrator of both the WhatsApp Group and E-network. Contact details will not be shared.

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**

The Clerk and Councillors 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. Email monitoring**

Holt 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.

#### **10. 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.

#### **11. Reporting security incidents**

All suspected security breaches or incidents should be reported immediately to the Clerk and/or Chair for investigation and resolution. Report any email-related security incidents or breaches to the Clerk/Chair immediately.

#### **12. Training and awareness**

The Clerk and Councillors will have access to training and resources (via DAPTC & NALC) to educate users about IT security best practices, privacy concerns, and technology updates.

#### **13. 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.

The Clerk and Councillors are responsible for the safety and security of Holt Parish Council's IT and email systems.

By adhering to this IT and Email Policy, Holt Parish Council aims to create a secure and efficient IT environment that supports its activities. In doing so, the Council seeks to safeguard sensitive information, promote responsible use of technology, and ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.

Adopted 09 07 25

Reviewed and updated 11 03 26