

Brixham Town Council
Use of E-mail Internet Telephone and Social Media Policy - Draft

1. Introduction/Purpose:

Electronic communications offer unique benefits and challenges. There are technical aspects to any electronic system that Brixham Town Council needs to take into account. The purpose of this policy is to set clear guidelines for staff and elected members of Brixham Town Council who have access to information technology and telephones. The aim of this policy is to

- Set out rights, responsibilities, and limitations on the use of organisational equipment
- Help prevent unauthorised or careless use of information technology/telephone equipment creating a legal risk to Brixham Town Council
- Help protect Brixham Town Council from liability for the actions of staff and Council members
- Draw attention to the legal risks that system users might inadvertently take
- Make clear to system users who they should contact about any particular aspect of the policy
- Notify system users of any privacy expectations in their communications
- Prevent damage to electronic systems. For example the importation of a virus
- Avoid and reduce unnecessary time being spent on non work related activities
- Avoid the overuse of electronic systems by staff and members and avoiding stress caused by high usage.

2. Information:

Staff and elected members of Brixham Town Council should be aware that electronic letters have the same legal status as written post, and therefore it is an offence to tamper with or intercept any electronic mail.

Sites visited via the internet are traceable.

The speed and ease of which e-mail is transmitted can lead to inadequate thought going into a message, and the possibility of the wrong words and tone being used that might be misinterpreted by the recipient is higher than a written posted letter.

Any e-mail sent can be immediately copied and forwarded in such a way that a written letter cannot. An e-mail can be global in fewer than ten minutes.

All Staff and elected members should consider the implications that their usage of the Internet and electronic mail may have on Brixham Town Council.

All Staff and elected members should understand that e-mail is not a neutral tool therefore before e-mailing staff and elected members should consider if a telephone call may be more pertinent when discussing complex or confidential matters.

All Staff and elected members should be aware that electronic communication is not 100% safe. Any one with the correct equipment can access your e-mail system.

Through the use of the internet, viruses can be imported into Brixham Town Council's information technology systems.

All Staff and elected members should be aware that there are legal implications both to themselves and Brixham Town Council through use of electronic communication.

3. Policy

Computers

There are rules regarding the unauthorised use of Town Council computers and software with which all staff must comply. A member of staff must not:

- I. Use unauthorised software, including games software, on computers.
- II. Illegally copy any software.
- III. Attempt to secure unauthorised access to any program or data held on any computer.
- IV. Attempt the unauthorised modification of the contents of any computer, including the introduction of viruses.
- V. Insert any external disc or memory device into the machine until it has been screened for viruses.
- VI. Use Brixham Town Council information technology equipment for computer games accepting those installed or sanctioned by the Town Clerk in the first instance or failing this the Evaluation Committee

Failure to comply with these rules may result in disciplinary action.

Use of telephone services both landline and mobile

Members of staff should not give members of the general public their own personal home numbers or mobile phone numbers

When working from home it is recognised that members of staff will have to use their own telephones to make work related calls. Members of staff are encouraged to claim back the cost of such calls.

Telephone use

Keep outgoing calls brief.

It has become second nature to reach for the telephone to deal with any problem. Whilst every effort is made to secure services from the most economic providers, costs are incurred every time the telephone is used. To keep telephone costs down please:

When answering a colleague's telephone, try to assist the caller or invite them to ring later rather offering to ring the caller back.

It is recognised members of staff may occasionally have to make a private telephone call. However, you are expected to keep such calls as brief as possible and to reimburse the practice for prolonged or long-distance calls.

Mobile telephones

Personal mobile phones may be switched on during work hours, particularly when an employee is working alone. However use of a personal mobile phone by a staff member should be restricted wherever possible to their own time.

Personal mobile phones must be switched off if attending meetings.

Internet & E-mail

E-mail is an important means of communication throughout business. Messages can be transferred quickly and conveniently through the Internet. However, since messages can be intercepted by external organisations and incoming messages can bring viruses or other information, e-mails should not be accepted from an unknown source.

In order to protect the staff within the Town Council and the Town Council itself, the management reserves the right to monitor any information that is kept or transferred between practice computers. This includes all e-mails, internet use and the use of programmes and software.

There are potential legal risks when using e-mail; the guidelines set out below are to ensure that both the staff within the Town Council and the Town Council itself are protected. Failure to comply with them may result in disciplinary action.

- Do not say anything in an e-mail message that you would not say in a letter or a memo. (E-mails have the same legal status as letters). Make sure that your messages are clear and cannot be misinterpreted in any way. Work on the assumption that people other than the addressee will read your messages.
- Never send e-mail messages or an attachment that
 - Is libellous or offensive, breaches confidential, the data protection act, equal rights or obscenity laws or could be considered to infringe on any other workers dignity or rights within the law
 - Unintentionally implies offering or accepting a contract
 - Reveals confidential information about Lawrence Weston Community Farm
 - Language that includes expletives
 - Defame colleagues whether intentionally or unintentionally
 - May be interpreted as a form of harassment or bullying
- Never send "highly confidential" messages by e-mail. Do not send "confidential" messages by e-mail unless it is vital that you do so.
- Always remember that e-mail messages may have to be disclosed in court proceedings or to regulatory bodies.
- Ensure that you obtain confirmation of receipt of important messages.
- Make hard copies of e-mails needed for your records.
- Do not copy e-mails to other people unnecessarily.
- Do not download, copy or transmit the works of people outside the Town Council without their permission, as this may infringe copyright.
- Before you send or download documents attached to e-mail messages, ensure that they have been checked for viruses.
- If you are expressing a personal opinion, finish your message with the following statement: "The opinions expressed in this message are my own and not those of my employer".
- Before you go on holiday, agree with your Manager to whom e-mail messages addressed to you should be transferred while you are away.

Staff may use the internet and e-mail for personal use. However the following guidelines must be adhered to

- Use should be restricted wherever possible to their own time.
- Staff should be aware that if they access personal bank accounts etc via Brixham Town Council cannot guarantee confidentiality. Such activity should be viewed as non-secure.

- Staff should not use information technology equipment provided by Brixham Town Council for the purposes of trading, or for stock market activity. This accepting trading on behalf of Brixham Town Council
- Staff should not use work related e-mail addresses to buy products from any website or Internet business. Accepting on behalf of Brixham Town Council
- At no time should staff use a work related e mail address for personal use.
- The accessing of pornography/adult sites is expressly prohibited for any reason
- Agreeing to accept or forward any information that is offensive or could be considered to infringe on any other workers dignity or rights within the law is prohibited
- Down loading unauthorised software, games, magazines, music and information is prohibited
- In connection with picture/mobile phone images under no circumstances should any member of Staff down load such images onto Brixham Town Council IT equipment. Accepting on behalf of Brixham Town Council

Social Media

The Town Council use social media sites to encourage discussion about Brixham Town Council matters and local issues with residents, businesses and community groups across Brixham and the wider area. The advantages of using social media are outlined in the Council's Social Media Networking Policy. We will strive to ensure our social media presence is as accessible, attractive honest and safe as possible.

There are potential risks associated with the use of social media; the guidelines set out below are to ensure that both the staff within the Town Council and the Town Council itself are protected. Staff must at all times adhere to our social media guidelines (below) Failure to comply with them may result in disciplinary action.

Staff are also reminded that the personal use of social media sites for personal social interaction is not permitted during working hours.

We reserve the right to remove any postings without warning and block anyone that breaks our social media guidelines, or the rules of the relevant social media sites, and we will remove any comments that:

- Are offensive comments or 'spam' links or images.
- Are not civil, tasteful and relevant
- We consider are unlawful, libellous or defamatory, threatening, harassing or abusive, racially offensive, harmful, obscene or of a sexual nature
- Contain swearing
- Are repeat postings of images or messages or that try to solicit money, harass in any way or attempt to install viruses onto people's computer and any other form of "spamming"
- Contain material which promotes or might be interpreted as promoting, a political party or parties
- Advertise products or services
- Contain content copied from elsewhere, for which you do not own the copyright
- Publicise personal contact information or infringe upon personal privacy
- Impersonate another person, or an organisation that you do not represent.

As the nature of social media is continuously evolving, Brixham Town Council reserves the right to amend its social media guidelines at any time.

Monitoring, responding and replying

Where possible and relevant a member of Brixham Town Council staff will reply in a courteous and timely manner to messages posted across the social media sites the Council uses. However this may not always be possible. The Council's social media profiles cannot be monitored 24 hours a day and during times of busy social media traffic, some comments may be missed or unanswerable.