

Over Stowey Parish Council IT Policy

1. Introduction

Over Stowey 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 Over Stowey Parish Council's IT resources, including computers, networks, software, devices, data, and email accounts.

3. Acceptable use of IT resources and email

Over Stowey 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.

4. Device and software usage

Where possible, authorised devices, software, and applications will be provided by Over Stowey 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 Over Stowey 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

Over Stowey 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 Over Stowey 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.

All emails sent to or received by council members or staff (as part of their role within Over Stowey Parish Council) are Council data. If a Freedom of Information request is made, any and all emails relating to Parish Council business may have to be disclosed, including emails on personal accounts

8. Password and account security

Over Stowey Parish Council users (staff 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. Personal devices used to access council related business must be password protected and access restricted to staff and councillors only

9. Websites and Social Media

The Clerk shall ensure that Over Stowey Parish Council website is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure content is accurate and up to date. The website must also be monitored for unauthorised use and access

If any member of Over Stowey Parish Council or staff use social media, it must be made clear that if posting regarding any council business, they are speaking in a

personal capacity and do not represent the view of Over Stowey Parish Council. All councillors and staff must adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct when using social media

10. Mobile devices and remote work

Mobile devices provided by Over Stowey 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.

11. Email monitoring and use of personal devices

Over Stowey 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

Councillors may use personal devices for council business providing:

- Devices are protected by a strong password or biometric security and have upto-date antivirus and security software
- Council data must not be stored on personal devices unless encrypted
- Data must not be shared with unauthorised persons, including any other user of the device
- Data must not be downloaded to unapproved apps or cloud services.
- Users must be vigilant when accessing the Council's network or information from public places (e.g. libraries, trains, open access computers at home etc) and/or overseas locations in order to reduce the risk of unauthorised disclosure or access.
- All data relating to Over Stowey Parish Council should be deleted when the user leaves the Parish Council.

Users are responsible for the security of council data on their devices.

Councillors should be aware that in the event of a Freedom of Information request, in some instances the personal device may be seized and retained for an undetermined time as a result of it possibly containing Council data.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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.

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

Date: March 18th 2026

Signature: P. Tully

Role: Chair

Signature: A. McMurren

Role: Clerk/RFO