



Working for the Community in Rotherfield, Mark Cross, Eridge Green, Boarshead and surrounding areas

IT and Acceptable Use Policy (2026)

1. Purpose of this Policy

This policy sets out the rules and standards for the safe, lawful, secure, and appropriate use of Information Technology ("IT") systems, equipment, services, and information used by Rotherfield Parish Council ("the Council").

The policy is intended to:

- Protect Council information, systems, and services;
- Ensure compliance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018;
- Reduce the risk of cyber incidents, fraud, phishing, malware, and data breaches;
- Define acceptable and unacceptable use of IT systems.
- Ensure councillors, employees, contractors, volunteers, and authorised users understand their responsibilities.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All councillors;
- Employees;
- Contractors and consultants;
- Volunteers;
- Any person authorised to access Council systems or information.
- It applies whether users are working in Council premises, remotely, from home, or using personal devices.

3. IT Systems Covered

This policy applies to all Council IT resources, including:

- Computers and laptops;
- Mobile phones and tablets;

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- Email accounts;
- Cloud storage and collaboration systems;
- Website and domain services;
- Social media accounts;
- Internet access;
- Printers and removable media;
- Back-up systems;
- Video conferencing systems.

4. General Principles

All users must:

- Use Council IT responsibly and professionally;
- Protect confidential and personal information;
- Follow cybersecurity good practice;
- Report incidents promptly;
- Comply with all Council policies and legal obligations. Limited personal use may be permitted where it is lawful, reasonable, and does not interfere with Council business.

5. User Responsibilities

Users are responsible for:

- Keeping passwords secure;
- Maintaining confidentiality of information;
- Locking devices when unattended;
- Using only authorised software and systems;
- Ensuring devices are updated;
- Reporting lost or stolen equipment immediately.

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Users must not:

- Share passwords;
- Install unauthorised software;
- Access unlawful or offensive material;
- Use Council systems for political campaigning or personal commercial gain.

6. Passwords and Authentication

All users must:

- Use strong passwords of at least 12 characters;
- Avoid password reuse;
- Use multi-factor authentication where available;
- Never share passwords. Passwords must be changed immediately if compromise is suspected.

7. Use of Personal Devices (BYOD)

Where personal devices are used for Council business:

- Devices must be password protected;
- Devices must use supported operating systems;
- Automatic updates should be enabled;
- Council data must be protected and kept secure.
- Upon leaving office or employment, Council data must be deleted from personal devices.

8. Email Use

Council email accounts must be used professionally and securely.

Users must:

- Exercise care with attachments and links;
- Verify suspicious emails;
- Use professional language;
- Protect confidential information.

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Users must not send offensive or inappropriate content.

9. Cybersecurity

Users must:

- Remain alert to phishing and fraud attempts;
- Keep systems updated;
- Report suspicious activity immediately;
- Complete cybersecurity awareness training where provided.

The Clerk shall ensure backups, updates, and access reviews are maintained.

10. Data Protection and Confidentiality

All users must comply with UK GDPR and the Council's Data Protection Policy.

Personal data must:

- Only be accessed where necessary;
- Be used lawfully;
- Be kept secure;
- Not be disclosed improperly.

11. Internet Use

Internet access is provided for legitimate Council purposes.

Users must not:

- Access illegal or offensive material;
- Download copyrighted material unlawfully;
- Compromise network security;
- Engage in excessive personal use.

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12. Social Media and Online Conduct

Only authorised persons may post on behalf of the Council.

Users must:

- Maintain professionalism online;
- Respect confidentiality;
- Avoid bringing the Council into disrepute.

13. Website and Domain Management

The Council should maintain a secure and accessible website and use official Council email accounts and domains where possible.

14. Remote Working

Users working remotely must:

- Use secure internet connections;
- Protect confidential information;
- Lock devices when unattended;
- Take care when working in public places.

15. Software and Licensing

Only authorised software may be installed on Council equipment.
Users must not use pirated or unlicensed software.

16. Monitoring and Privacy

The Council reserves the right to monitor use of its IT systems where lawful and proportionate.

17. Records Management and Retention

Electronic records must be stored securely, retained appropriately, and disposed of securely when no longer required.

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18. Incident Reporting

Users must report immediately:

- Suspected phishing attempts;
- Lost or stolen devices;
- Malware infections;
- Data breaches;
- Unauthorised access.

19. Breaches of this Policy

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action, removal of access rights, or referral to relevant authorities.

20. Training and Review

The Council will provide appropriate guidance and review this policy annually or following significant legislative or operational changes.

21. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Data Protection Policy;
- Privacy Notice;
- Records Retention Policy;
- Social Media Policy;
- Freedom of Information Publication Scheme;
- Members' Code of Conduct.

Adoption

This policy was adopted at the Parish Council Meeting on the **28th May 2026**

Review Date: May 2027

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