



## **Theydon Bois Parish Council IT Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

Theydon Bois 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. Definitions**

*Users* – councillors, employees and third parties acting on behalf of the Council.

*Data* – digitally stored information including (but not limited to) documents, copyrighted / copyrightable text, images, personal information, accounting information.

*IT hardware/software* – includes, but is not limited to computers, internet access, remote access connections, email servers, file storage, webmail, smart phones, telephones, website, mobile phones etc.

### **3. Scope**

This policy applies to all individuals who use Theydon Bois Parish Council's IT resources, including computers, networks, software, devices, data, and email accounts.

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

Theydon Bois 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.

## **5. Device and software usage**

Where possible, authorised devices, software, and applications will be provided by Theydon Bois Parish Council for work-related tasks.

The device, software, data access and services provided remain property of the Council and shall be recorded on the asset register. At the end of any period of holding office, employment with or work for the Council, all equipment must be returned to the Clerk, Chair or Vice-Chair in full working condition. If equipment has been lost or damaged, or not returned within 14 days of leaving office, a charge may be made for its replacement or repair.

Users must comply with all relevant policies, procedures and UK legislation with respect to the use of IT hardware

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

## **6. Data management and security**

All sensitive and confidential Theydon Bois 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.

Users must:

- Ensure that devices are shutdown at the end of the working day.
- Ensure that screens are locked when away from desks, or members of public come into the office.

## **7. Network and internet usage**

Theydon Bois 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.

## **8. Email communication**

Email accounts provided by Theydon Bois 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.

## **9. Password and account security**

Theydon Bois 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.

## **10. Mobile devices and remote Work**

Mobile devices provided by Theydon Bois 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**

Theydon Bois 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.

## **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. Risk Management**

As part of its risk management the Council maintains insurance on the equipment provided.

All equipment must be secured from theft or unauthorised use as far as is practical. When travelling with equipment, it should not be left in an unattended vehicle unless there is no other option, in which case it should be secured out of sight.

Any loss of, or damage to equipment should be reported as soon as possible to the Clerk and Chair and any criminal damage will be reported to the Police by the Clerk. Any loss of personal data as the result of loss or theft of equipment shall be reported to the Clerk and Chair and Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). An annual risk assessment should be undertaken regarding use and security of Council IT hardware, software and stored data

## **15. Training and awareness**

Theydon Bois 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.

## **16. Compliance and consequences**

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

## **17. 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.

## **19. Contacts**

For IT-related enquiries or assistance, users can contact the parish clerk.

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