

EMAIL POLICY

January 2017 (next review due 2019)

1. Finchampstead Parish Council (FPC) recognises email as a valuable communications tool that adds to other communication channels and encourages its use by elected members and staff.
2. FPC provides email addresses for the use of councillors and staff. It does not provide computer equipment but will consider requests by councillors for assistance in training in use of new technology.
3. All FPC email will contain the standard email disclaimer:

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

The contents of this e-mail are confidential to the ordinary user of the e-mail address to which it was addressed and may also be privileged. If you are not the addressee of this e-mail you may not copy, forward, disclose or otherwise use it or any part of it in any form whatsoever. If you have received this e-mail in error please delete it and notify the sender immediately; you should not retain the message or disclose its contents to anyone.

4. All staff must and councillors are strongly recommended to use the provided FPC email addresses for conducting FPC business. However, Councillors choosing to use personal or business email accounts for conducting FPC business must have the permission of the account and equipment owner and must ensure compliance with these policies, including use of the standard disclaimer (see 3). FPC accepts no liability for any loss or damage however caused through use of third party IT systems for FPC business.
5. Local Council legislation and FPC procedures do not allow for electronic decision-making. Expressly, email exchanges should not be used for any decision making (or discussions about topics) pertaining to the remit of main council, committees or subcommittees. Exceptions to this must be by formal recorded agreement at the appropriate governing meeting or forum.
6. All correspondence is subject to formal scrutiny, and FPC requires email to conform to the same level of scrutiny as all other means of communication. Therefore, when using email, councillors and staff will conform to codes of conduct and such procedural and legal constraints as apply to all other activities.
7. Supplementary guidance on good email practice is available from a wide range of sources and will be made available. In particular, the additional risk that email can bring viruses and other problems into our own and third party computer systems must be recognised and relevant best practice adhered to by FPC.
8. Chairs of committees will be responsible for monitoring email correspondence relevant to their area of work and ensuring compliance with these policies and associated guidance.

Supplementary guidance.

Purpose and Use of FPC email addresses.

1. An FPC e-mail address is expressly for the purpose of supporting the Council's business activities.
 - Under no circumstances should the service be used to operate or support a business or private venture.
 - Under no circumstances should the service be used for any purpose that may be considered illegal or mischievous.
2. The FPC e-mail may not be used for transmitting, retrieving or storing any communication of a discriminatory or harassing nature or materials that are offensive, obscene, pornographic or sexually explicit. Users must not use or transmit abusive, profane or offensive language
3. FPC reserves the right to use software to monitor and control access to undesirable content.
4. Accounts will be disabled for staff and councillors leaving the Council.

Using email effectively

1. Do not assume privacy for any Internet communications of any kind. E-mails and/or files can be posted or forwarded to other Internet users around the world without the user's knowledge or permission.
2. Defamatory, libellous, abusive, sexist or racist comments in e-mail may render the sender personally liable to civil action.
3. Any messages or information sent by an Employee or Member are statements that reflect the Council. All Users should be aware that their views will be construed as representing the Council. Users must include a disclaimer with their email stating that 'the views expressed are personal and may not necessarily reflect those of FPC, unless explicitly stated otherwise. Members using their private or business email addresses should clearly distinguish FPC emails from their own emails when corresponding with third parties on behalf of FPC. Guidance on creation of standard electronic signatures can be provided. It should be noted that a disclaimer does not legally divorce the legal connection between the sender and the Council.
4. The following procedures are recommended practice:-

DO:

- **Consider whether e-mail is the best way to send a message;**
 - *messages may not be secure.*
 - *messages may not be read immediately. Don't assume that they have been read!*
 - *messages may be produced as proof that you said something.*
 - *Messages may be held to be legally binding.*
 - *Messages may be subject to tampering after delivery or sending. Messages can be edited!*
 - *Messages may continue to exist after you think you have deleted them. Never assume that deleted items can't be retrieved!*
- **Apply the same principles you would use with a printed memo;**
 - *Content should be clear and not open to misinterpretation. Use plain English.*
 - *Include a meaningful and logical subject line. If the recipient is not expecting the e-mail and does not recognise the subject of the data they may delete it. Always ring the recipient if they are not expecting something unusual.*

- *Include your position and contact details the first time you correspond.*
 - *Use standard fonts and effects to ensure legibility.*
 - *Only copy to those who need a copy.*
 - *If you are transmitting sensitive data, send it in a password protected document.*
- ❑ **Make it clear to recipients why you are sending an email, especially circular emails**
 - *Is it for information only, or do you expect a reply?*
 - *Is it a request for a specific piece of information, or are you seeking opinion?*
 - ❑ **Check incoming mail regularly and respond promptly;**
 - ❑ **Ensure the recipient can open attachments if you use them.**
 - ❑ **Do not save attachments in your email file. Save them to a logical location in your work area.**

DON'T

- ❑ **Use e-mail to avoid difficult face-to-face communication.**
- ❑ **Use email for dialogue which should be held in meetings or get into “tit for tat” interchanges.**
- ❑ **Use e-mail to send confidential information. If you have to use email send your correspondence in an attached word file with password protection.**
- ❑ **Use e-mail to send personal information without authorisation.**
- ❑ **Send messages that may be read as obscene, harassing, intimidating or discriminatory.**
- ❑ **Send messages in anger, even in response to abusive mail.**
- ❑ **Send messages in CAPITALS – it may be interpreted as shouting.**
- ❑ **Send messages to ‘everyone’ or “reply all” without checking whether it is relevant and appropriate to do so.**
- ❑ **Open messages received from Senders you do not recognise. Delete the message from your in-box and deleted items.**
- ❑ **Open attachments that you are not expecting from colleagues or from unknown sources. Check with the sender if you are not expecting the attachment.**
- ❑ **Forward or respond to junk mail, chain letters, virus hoaxes etc.**

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