



# Baughurst Parish Council

## Email Policy

### INTRODUCTION BY BAUGHURST PARISH COUNCIL

This is version 1.1 of the Baughurst Parish Council Email Policy which has been created to mandate best practice and promote guidance for users that will significantly enhance the experience for councillors in using the email system.

Email is regularly used for the management and administration of the business of Baughurst Parish Council. Used effectively, the email service can provide considerable benefits to all users. However, email cannot be seen as the sole communications tool available to the council, and it needs to be used in conjunction with other ubiquitous technologies to provide an effective working environment.

This Email policy was adopted by the council at its meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

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# Baughurst Parish Council

## 1. Scope

This Policy applies to:

- employees
- elected members (councillors)
- members of the public
- other people, companies and organisations in contact with Baughurst Parish Council

## 2. Policy Statement

Baughurst Parish Council encourages the effective use of email.

Such use must always be lawful and must not compromise the council's information and the council's computer system.

All users must ensure that their use of email will not adversely affect the council or its business and not damage the council's or its employees' reputations or otherwise violate any of the council's policies.

## 3. Use of Email Facilities

All users must use email responsibly. Baughurst Parish Council reserves the right to take disciplinary or legal action against any person who fails to comply with this policy.

All users must accept that communications via the council's email system is not secure or encrypted and they should take particular care when sending potentially sensitive or confidential information. Examples of particular care include adding sensitive material as a password-protected attachment to an email and then sharing the password by another means and storing the document on a share and sending only the link to the document through email.

All users must accept and agree that communications both to and from the council via email may be monitored for the purpose of ensuring appropriate use of this methodology. Users should also be aware that deleted emails may still be accessible from back-ups.



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All councillors and selected members of council staff will be provided with an email account for their use. The email account will be named as [firstname.surname@baughurst-pc.gov.uk](mailto:firstname.surname@baughurst-pc.gov.uk) or [role@baughurst-pc.gov.uk](mailto:role@baughurst-pc.gov.uk). The user will need to link to their account using their chosen client software such as Outlook or a browser. It is mandatory for councillors and employees to use the parish council email service for council business, and it is forbidden for councillors and employees to use the parish council email service for non-council business.

## 4. General Guidance

Email users are advised to be aware of the following:

- Messages sent to groups of people must be relevant to all concerned. The use of groups of users is encouraged, for instance address a committee. Council-wide address groups will be developed and made available.
- Messages sent by this method are not necessarily seen by the recipient within the current week. If the message is urgent, an alternative method of contact should be used.
- The parish email service is an open environment, encouraging the sharing of information and collaboration, and as such use of bcc to address recipients is to be avoided.
- Attachments to emails are also be avoided whenever possible by using the parish file share to manage large files. Please remember that the recipient may need the information in an open standard form such as pdf.

## 5. Business Use

The Clerk has the sole authority to purchase or acquire goods or services on behalf of the council via email.

Users are informed that email messages have the same status in law as written correspondence and are subject to the same legal implications, e.g., may be required to be disclosed in Court. Hence use of the council email service is mandated to reduce risk of exposure of personal accounts to investigations.



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Users are required to apply the same high standards to emails as those applied to written correspondence (including the use of spellcheckers)

Email accounts must be checked regularly to ascertain all correspondence within that system.

The Clerk must ensure that the Clerk's account is checked during times of extended absence (more than one week) due to holiday or sickness, etc by a representative of the council so that urgent actions can be dealt with. The Clerk should also ensure that, during times of absence, an Out of Office message is created indicating where the sender should redirect their message.

Discovery of an email which claims to contain a virus, or a solution to correct a previously transmitted virus, must be reported immediately to the Clerk.

All users must comply with the relevant licence terms and conditions when copying and/or downloading material.

Users accept that there is no guarantee of delivery of emails unless acceptance of delivery is requested of the recipient.

All users must comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 when placing personal data in messages or attachments.

## **6. Inappropriate Use**

Users of the Parish Council email system must use it to carry out their function as a representative of the Council in a professional manner. No other use is permitted and could result in disciplinary or legal action.

## **7. Accidental Access to Inappropriate Material**

If inappropriate material is accessed accidentally, users must report this immediately to the Clerk who will seek a technical solution to the issue, such as alterations to spam filters, and may agree further action with the Chairman of the Council to inhibit access to such materials, such as blacklisting the sender or changing email addresses for the user.



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## **8. Offensive or Threatening Emails**

If a user of the email service received an email that they believe is offensive or threatening they should:

- Not reply to the email;
- Copy the email to the Clerk explaining why they believe it to be offensive or threatening;
- Delete the email from their inbox – it will be retained on the system and will be available for review.

The Clerk will inform the sender that the email is considered offensive or threatening and may, with guidance from the Chairman of Council, investigate with the appropriate authority to take further action. The user will be kept informed of any action taken.

## **9. Responsible Officer**

The Clerk will be responsible for the administration of this policy on behalf of Baughurst Parish Council and will report breaches to the Chairman of the Council for advice about further action. The IT Working Group is responsible for content of this policy.



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## APPENDIX 1 AMENDMENT HISTORY

This is the first amendment to version 1 of the email policy,

Reference	Amendment
Version 1.1 All sections	Amended following comments in March 2023

Reviewed: June 2023

Review date: November 2023