

THURSFORD PARISH COUNCIL IT POLICY

1. Introduction

Thursford Parish Council recognises the importance of effective and secure information technology (IT) and email usage in 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 IT resources on behalf of Thursford Parish Council, including computers, software, devices, data, and email accounts, as appropriate.

3. Acceptable use of IT resources and email

All users must adhere to ethical standards, respect copyright and intellectual property rights when using IT on Council business.

4. Device and software usage

When possible, authorised devices, software, and applications will be provided by Thursford Parish Council for work-related tasks. If an authorised device is provided by the Council, only authorised software should be installed on a device belonging to the Council.

Any data stored on a personal device should be password protected. Data should not be moved or stored onto any external device (such as USB sticks or external hard drives) without the express permission of the Council.

5. Data management and security

All sensitive and confidential Thursford 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. Email communication

Thursford Parish Council acknowledges that Councillors are using personal email addresses which the ICO state in their guidance leads to security risks. Thursford Parish Council request that, whenever possible, Councillors set up an email account that is solely used for official Council-related activities and tasks.

The ICO note in their guidance that usage of personal email accounts may result in compromise of personal data.

Email accounts provided by the Parish Council are for official communication only.

All emails sent on behalf of the Council 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.

7. Password and account security

Thursford Parish Councillors are responsible for maintaining the security of their personal email accounts and passwords relating to Parish Council matters which are held on their personal

phone, laptop and desktop. Passwords should be strong and not shared with others. Regular password changes are encouraged to enhance security.

8. Mobile devices and remote Work

Currently Thursford Parish Council does not provide any mobile devices.

9. Email monitoring

Thursford 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.

10. Retention and archiving

Emails should be retained and archived in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements:

Personal data should be retained for no longer than it is needed for- individuals have a right to erasure of data no longer required.

Administrative and financial documentation should be dealt with as follows (The defined retention period starts following the last relevant entry):

- 2 years –includes types of records that are generally of low or short-term value such as those relating to general administration,
- 6 years – review or destroy: includes types of records that generally need to be retained by law or for audit or compliance purposes but aren't considered to be of historical value. Examples include those relating to finance, commercial activities, facilities management and information management
- Permanent preservation: includes such records as the original copy of signed Meeting Minutes

An Inbox should be regularly reviewed and unnecessary emails should be deleted to maintain an organised inbox.

11. Reporting security incidents

All suspected security breaches or incidents should be reported immediately to the Clerk for investigation and resolution.

12. Training and awareness

Thursford Parish Council will provide training and resources where necessary to educate users about IT security best practices, privacy concerns, and technology updates. All employees and Councillors will receive regular updates on email security and current best practices.

13. 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.

14. Contacts

For IT-related enquiries or assistance, users can contact the Clerk at: Parishclerk_thursford@yahoo.com and clerk@thursfordparish.gov.uk

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

