

5. E-MAIL POLICY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The e-mail system exists to provide Enborne Parish Council and intra-council communication. Limited personal use is permitted, provided it does not interfere with personal or general productivity, and conforms to the Enborne Parish Council's e-mail policy.

5.2 PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

E-mail messages have been used as evidence in legal proceedings and it is common business practice to retain backup copies. E-mail should not be assumed private, either internally or, in the event of legal action, externally. In some circumstances, Enborne Parish Council may monitor and block e-mail messages and people other than the author and the recipient may read them. Enborne Parish Council confidential information should not be sent by e-mail, even if intended only for internal receipt.

5.3 VIRUSES, GAMES AND UNAUTHORISED SOFTWARE

Viruses can destroy systems, software and data on computers across the network, so computer programs, games, animations, cards or screen savers (all of which are types of computer program) or any unchecked data or unofficial software, must not be loaded on to, downloaded to, or distributed on any of Enborne Parish Council's PCs, laptops or other computer systems. Wherever possible Enborne Parish Council will seek to identify and block inbound and internal e-mail messages containing attachments, which may be potentially damaging, unauthorised or illegal, and to maintain a high degree of protection (anti-virus).

If an unofficial program or unauthorised software is received - either by e-mail attachment or any other method - it should not be opened, stored or forwarded to other users, either internal or external. Even trusted sources can unwittingly spread a virus. Any e-mails of this type should be deleted. If there is concern that a message or attachment may contain a virus or program, the Clerk should be notified immediately.

The Clerk will either clear it from the computer and ensure it has not infected other PCs etc, or obtain assistance to do so. Chain e-mails should be ignored: many are disguised as 'warnings' of computer viruses, or incredible 'special offers' and requests to forward the message to others. These e-mails should not be forwarded to anyone else.

5.4 RETENTION AND PURGING

E-mail files should be purged every 90 days. Personal e-mail files need to be purged regularly, or the mailbox may overload and reject incoming messages. It is recommended that non-essential messages are not kept for more than 90 days in personal e-mail storage.

5.5 COPYRIGHT AND OWNERSHIP

As is the case with papers or documents received as an employee, e-mail messages and attachments remain the property of Enborne Parish Council. E-mail messages or attachments generated by in the capacity of an employee are both the property and copyright material of Enborne Parish Council. Usage of the e-mail system – including message content – may be monitored to support, among other things, operational, maintenance, auditing, security and investigative activities. Enborne Parish Council may also, from time to time, be called upon to turn over e-mail files to law enforcement agencies, regulatory authorities and private litigants.

5.6 CONTRACTS AND NEGOTIATIONS

E-mail protocols are less formal than normal business ones, but e-mail with trading partners or customers should be treated in the same way as other business correspondence. In contract negotiations, terms set out or implied in an e-mail correspondence may be legally binding on Enborne Parish Council or the recipient. The wording below is appended to all e-mail messages being sent outside Enborne Parish Council.

'This e-mail is from Enborne Parish Council. This message, its contents and any attachments to it are private and confidential. Any unauthorised disclosure, use or dissemination of the whole or any part of this message (without our prior consent in writing) is prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient of this message please notify us immediately. No contracts or agreements may be concluded on behalf of Enborne Parish Council by means of e-mail.'

5.7 NON-COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

The e-mail system must not be used for soliciting for non-council charitable endeavours, conducting private business activities or other non-council activities, distributing advertising material or other non-business literature to other employees, soliciting their involvement in non-council activities, or for sending chain letters.

5.8 OFFENSIVE MATERIAL

Those using Enborne Parish Council's e-mail system do so having accepted the risk that inbound e-mails may contain explicit or offensive material that is beyond the control of Enborne Parish Council. Enborne Parish Council appreciates that recipients have little control over the content of incoming e-mail from outside Enborne Parish Council, but employees are strictly prohibited from soliciting, storing or distributing e-mails or attachments containing material which is, or may be interpreted to be, discriminatory, defamatory, abusive or offensive to the recipient or any other individual or organisation.

5.9 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The system may not be used to compose or distribute e-mail messages or attachments which breach copyright, trademark or other intellectual property rights of any other person or organisation.

5.10 INTEGRITY

Users of the e-mail system must draft messages and attachments in accordance with Enborne Parish Council policy and with legislation on discrimination, harassment and defamation.