



OAKHAM TOWN COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR EMAIL POLICY

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OAKHAM TOWN COUNCIL EMAIL POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Oakham Town Council provides all councillors with official council email addresses to assist in their duties, present a professional image, and comply with data protection and freedom of information obligations. This policy outlines best practices for email use in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). All employees and councillors must maintain a professional approach at all times.

LEGAL OBLIGATION

As a public body, the Town Council is subject to FOIA and GDPR. The FOIA allows the public to request information from the council, which must be managed in compliance with GDPR. Information held by the council and councillors is subject to the FOIA and must be made available upon request. As data controllers, councils must ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of all personal data, even when processed through personal email accounts or stored on private devices.

PURPOSE

The policy aims to guide councillors in using emails for official council business. It mitigates risks such as damage to the council's reputation and potential litigation. Using dedicated council email addresses facilitates secure data processing and compliance with GDPR. Councillors should use their assigned council email addresses for all official business.

USE OF EMAILS

Councillors are provided with dedicated council email accounts, accessible to the public via the council website. Councillors must use their council email addresses for official business only. Private email accounts used for council business are still subject to FOIA and can be searched for requested information. Deleting or concealing information to prevent disclosure following an FOIA request is a criminal offense under section 77 of the FOIA and may result in prosecution.

USING PERSONAL EMAIL FOR WORK

It's generally best to keep work and personal communications separate. This helps in maintaining organisation, security, and professionalism. The disadvantages of using personal email for council business are as follows:

1. **Security Risks:** Work-related emails often contain sensitive information. Using a personal email account can expose this data to hackers if your account is compromised.
2. **Data Management:** It can be challenging to keep track of work-related emails among personal ones. Important messages might get lost or overlooked.
3. **Professionalism:** Using a work email address presents a more professional image to colleagues and clients. It also helps in maintaining a clear boundary between personal and professional communication.
4. **Accountability:** If a company needs to access work-related emails for any reason, it's much easier to do so if those emails are on a work email account.

5. **GDPR Compliance:** The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requires organizations to protect personal data in all its forms. Using a personal email for work can lead to non-compliance with GDPR, as it may not have the necessary security measures in place to protect personal data.
6. **FOI Compliance:** The Freedom of Information Act (FOI) requires public authorities to provide access to recorded information. Using a personal email for work can complicate compliance with FOI requests, as it may be difficult to locate and retrieve work-related information from personal accounts.
7. **Backup Policy:** Organizations often have specific backup policies to ensure that work-related emails are regularly backed up and can be recovered in case of data loss. Personal email accounts may not be included in these backup policies, leading to potential data loss.

EMAIL CONTENT

Councillors must exercise care with email content to avoid claims of discrimination, harassment, defamation, breach of confidentiality, or breach of contract. When conducting council business, councillors must not:

- Send emails containing libellous, defamatory, offensive, racist, or obscene comments.
- Forward emails or attachments without ensuring that the information can be shared.
- Publicize confidential information.
- Send emails that contravene the Councillors' Code of Conduct.
- CC other councillors or officers unless the subject matter specifically relates to them or their responsibilities.

COUNCIL REQUIREMENT FOR USING COUNCIL EMAIL ADDRESSES

Councillors are required to use their official council email addresses for all council-related communications. This mandate ensures compliance with data protection laws, reduces data breach risks, and facilitates the management of freedom of information requests. Using personal email accounts for council business complicates regulatory compliance and increases data breach risks, as regular backups cannot be enforced.

Adherence to this requirement is essential to maintaining the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of council information.