

# Information Technology Policy

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Allhallows Parish Council (“the Council”) uses its computer systems, software packages and the internet, (including e-mail and its website), to further the efficiency of its business and to provide the best service possible to its parishioners and partners. Any disruption to the use of these facilities will be detrimental to the Council. This policy sets out how the Council intends to regulate the use of those facilities. The Council has a duty, laid down in the General Data Protection Regulation 2018, to ensure the proper security and privacy of its computer systems and data. For the purposes of this document the terms “computer” (or “computer system”) and “computer data” are defined as follows: • “Computer” (or “computer system”) means any device for automatic storing and processing of data and includes any laptop, tablet, mobile phone, portable storage device or peripheral device (such as scanner or printer) that is the property of the Council or owned by the Clerk.. • “Computer data” means any information stored and processed by computer and includes programs, text, pictures, video and sound.

## 2 GENERAL OPERATION

All hardware, software, data and associated documentation produced in connection with the work of the Council, are the legal property of the Council (except where the computer is owned by the clerk).

1. The Council will include an assessment of risks from its use of IT in its Risk Assessment.
2. The Council will routinely back up its essential data and organise contingency plans.
3. The Council will make a detailed inventory of its ICT equipment on its Asset Register (except where the computer is owned by the clerk).
4. The disposal of any ICT equipment, software, waste or data must be authorised, undertaken safely, securely and properly documented.
5. The Clerk has delegated authority to operate the Council’s website and social media.

## 3 COMPLIANCE WITH LEGISLATION

Under the Computer Misuse Act 1990, the following are criminal offences, if undertaken intentionally:

1. unauthorised access to a computer system or data;
2. unauthorised access preparatory to another criminal action;

3. unauthorised modification of a computer system or data (except where the computer is owned by the clerk).

Deliberate unauthorised use, alteration, or interference with the computer system or its software or data (including the Council's website and social media) will be regarded as a breach of the Council policy and may be treated as gross misconduct. In some circumstances such a breach may also be a criminal offence. ADPC Page 2 of 3 Information Technology Policy It is an offence under the Copyright, Design and Patent Act to copy licensed software without the consent of the copyright owner. All copying is forbidden by the Act, unless it is in accordance with the terms and conditions of the respective licence or contract.

#### 4 SECURITY

Consideration must be given to the secure location of equipment, data and documentation to help safeguard the Council's ICT assets. Portable equipment must be locked away when not in use.

Only persons authorised by the Parish Clerk may use Council computer systems and data. The authority given to use a system or data must be sufficient but not excessive and users must be notified that the authority given to them must not be exceeded.

#### 5 MALWARE

Malware is undesirable pieces of computer code that can corrupt systems, equipment and data. It is a serious, increasing threat to the computer systems of the Council.

The Council's computers will have loaded and operate up-to-date software for protection from malware.

Portable drives of unknown origin should not be used in the Council's computers.

No software should be located onto the Council's equipment without the permission of the Parish Clerk.

If malware is suspected, the equipment should be switched off and isolated and the Council's support contractor should be contacted.

#### 6 MISUSE

This Policy applies to the activities which constitute unacceptable use of the computers operated by the Council. The policy applies equally to employees, councillors and others who may be allowed to use the facilities on a permanent or temporary basis. All misuse of the facilities is prohibited including specifically, but not exclusively, the following:

1. The creation or transmission of any offensive, obscene or indecent images, data or other material or any data capable of being resolved into obscene or indecent images or material.
2. The creation of material which is designed or likely to cause annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety.
3. The creation or transmission of defamatory material.
4. The transmission of material in any way that infringes the copyright of another person.
5. The transmission of unsolicited commercial advertising material to networks belonging to other organisations.
6. Deliberate actions or activities with any of the following characteristics:
  - a) Wasting staff effort or networked resource;
  - b) Corrupting or destroying another user's data;
  - c) Violating the privacy of other users;
  - d) Disrupting the work of other users;
  - e) Other misuse of resources by the deliberate introduction of malware;
  - f) Private use of the facilities without specific consent; ADPC Page 3 of 3 Information Technology Policy
  - g) Altering the set up or operating parameters of any computer equipment without authority.

7 HEALTH AND SAFETY Computers are now a part of everyday life. If they are not used correctly, they can present hazards. Computers may be called Display Screen Equipment (DSE), Visual Display Units (VDUs) and the immediate environment where they are used i.e. desk/chair etc. is referred to as a workstation.

The Display Screen Equipment Regulations, 1992 regulate the use of computers at work and refer to the persons affected as "users". "Users" are persons who "habitually use VDUs as a significant part of their normal work and regularly work on display screens for two/three hours each day or continuously for more than one-hour spells".

To meet the requirements of the Display Screen Equipment Regulations, the Council will provide a free eye test for all staff that use VDU equipment as a major part of their job. It is the Council's intention to optimise the use and application of display screen equipment, whilst safeguarding the health, welfare and job satisfaction or learning experience of those involved in using such equipment.

Risk assessments of all workstations are carried out to highlight any problems annually.

8 PLATFORMS FOR VIRTUAL MEETINGS Current legislation does not allow formal meetings of English parish councils to be held virtually. Should this change, then any platform selected to support virtual formal meetings shall provide the following.

1. A facility for members of the public to participate and observe the proceedings
2. A facility to allow members of the public and members of the Council to participate and observe via a landline telephone

Approved November 2025