



Email Policy

Reviewed by Detling Parish Council on 5 September 2023

To be reviewed every two years

or

On Change of Legislation

This Council has agreed that all councillors, employees, volunteers, and any other person who is directly connected with the council will use the adopted official email addresses for ALL Parish Council email communications.

No councillors, employees, volunteers, and any other person who is directly connected with the council will use any other email address (including any personal email address) for ANY Parish Council email communications.

This Parish Council acknowledges the Information Commissioners Office Guidance on use of emails and personal emails in “Bring Your Own Devices” and has opted to exceed the standards suggest by adopting a unified email address system.

This has been agreed as under the Freedom of Information Act, the Data Protection Acts and the General Data Protection Regulations ALL email accounts that contain council emails may be inspected by a competent authority. This will ensure full compliance with the need to compromise personal information.

The council believes this is the most efficient and effective way of working together and keeping in touch with the community but before you can make use of this facility, there are some things you need to know.

You have been provided with an email account specifically for your work with the Parish Council.

- a. First, and most important: do not use email to make decisions or influence decisions that should be made at a meeting of the council or Committee you are a member of. Standing Orders and the Code of Conduct are clear on the rules of debate and you should check them if you are in any doubt.

- b. Next, the law does not allow councillors to act independently, and you should make sure that you do not imply that the content of your email represents the opinion or policy of the council as a whole. An individual Councillor has no Executive authority and should not purport to act on behalf of the Council unless authorised to do so. As an individual, you can think, say, and write what you like, but as a councillor, your view can only be the view of the whole council.
- c. When you use the parish account to send an email, the recipient can be excused for thinking it is an 'official' communication sent on behalf of the council. You should be particularly careful if you are agreeing to do something as it may be seen as a commitment by the Parish Council.
- d. Third, your parish emails are not confidential; every email is stored in the archive and is available to the public through a freedom of information request. Although the emails will be cleared of any personal data before they are released, it is better to avoid disclosing anything personal or confidential in the first place; email is not a secure medium.
- e. Fourth, no disclaimer will help if you send an email that contains illegal, offensive, obscene, racist, abusive material or libellous, defamatory, or discriminative material which may bring the council into disrepute.
- f. Finally, the only person who can authorise an official email is the Clerk who writes on your behalf to give the Council's views. Sometimes there will be good practical reasons why these official emails should be sent or forwarded from a Councillor's account. Normally it will be because you have been asked to do so, but if there is any doubt about your authority to write or send such an email, please check with the Clerk first. Where confidential material is circulated an appropriate disclaimer should be added to the beginning of the email.

On page three of this policy are the terms and conditions for the detlingparishcouncil.co.uk domain. By using the Parish Council's email address, you are agreeing to abide by them so please make sure you understand the rules.

Terms and conditions of use

- a. Whereas Detling Parish Council (the Council) is the licensee of the domain *detlingparishcouncil.co.uk* (the Domain) it authorises its members, officers, and employees to hold and use email accounts within the Domain. The account holders agree that the Council is a legal entity in its own right and separate from any of its members. Account holders will not change the password/s provided by the Clerk.
- b. Account holders within the Domain consent to receive Summons and Notices of Meetings by electronic means if previously agreed with the clerk.
- c. The number of email accounts may be amended from time to time as the Council sees fit.
- d. The names of any email accounts including any aliases shall have no meaning or context beyond that of being a device to identify and differentiate the account holders within the Parish Council's Domain.
- e. The council shall be held harmless from any claims made or views expressed or any other content within an email distributed from the domain by its members through the inclusion of a footnote Disclaimer, the wording of which shall be determined by the Clerk and included here. The Disclaimer should be appended to all outgoing emails (if email clients allow).
- f. An email may be signed by the Council itself by using only the words "Detling Parish Council". Any such email must be both sent from the Clerk's account *clerk@detlingparishcouncil.org.uk* and authorised by the Clerk or by a member acting under the Clerk's instruction.
- g. An email may be signed by the Clerk by using his/her name, title, and the words "Detling Parish Council". An email authored by the Clerk shall be the same as if it had been authored by the Council itself.
- h. All outgoing emails from the domain regardless of the author shall observe relevant data protection legislation and, where there are

multiple private addressees who have no association, such emails shall be distributed by blind copy only.

- i. Members may use the Council's email accounts for council business only.
- j. Members should not deliberately delete emails that refer to council business, however, members may delete emails that do not refer to council business such as unintended SPAM email or marketing emails.
- k. Members should be aware that any or email emails received or sent may be retained in an overall system archive, even if they have been deleted from your own email account, this is to ensure that we comply with Data Protection laws and in accordance with the Detling Council's Document Retention Policy

Good practices

- a. Before sending an email message, consider if it may be more effective to communicate face to face or by telephone. It is easy to misconstrue the contents of an email which can lead to confusion and poor communication, whilst a quick telephone conversation can prevent extensive email "ping-pong" conversations clarifying an email's meaning.
- b. Users should not send or forward any chain emails (e.g. jokes and virus warnings) from their Council email account as both of these can contain malware. In addition, almost all virus warnings and police warnings circulating via email are actually hoaxes designed to clog up email systems by scaring people into forwarding them across the internet.
- c. Remember that the authenticity of any email received cannot be guaranteed, especially with the prevalence of email "spoofing" (emails pretending to come from a source gathered through dubious means). In particular, users should always avoid opening any attachments to emails that are unexpected.

- d. When sending an email, users should only “cc” and “bcc” people who really need to be informed. Users should take care when using the “Reply to All” function as this may be inappropriate, especially when you have been the blind recipient.
- e. Email etiquette construes capitalisation as SHOUTING, so it is best to avoid inappropriate use of upper case in messages.

Setting up and Closing an Email Account

- a. The Parish Clerk (or other designated person) will set up a new email account as required. Email account holders will not change the password/s provided by the Clerk.
- b. For new councillors, this will normally be within 48 hours of becoming a councillor for any other position it will normally be within 7 days.
- c. When councillors, employees, volunteers, and any other person who is directly connected with the council ceases to be part of the Parish Council, their email account will be closed down and all emails (sent or received) will be archived in accordance with the law.

Restriction of Email Service

- a. If it becomes clear that any councillor, employee, volunteer, or any other person who is directly connected with the council is misusing the email system and using it in a way that a competent person would deem as being inappropriate, then the Parish Clerk (after consultation with the Chair of the Council or in their absence the Vice-Chair) may restrict or suspend the account.
- b. This will only normally occur if:
 - i. A person is sending inappropriate emails.
 - ii. A person is sending emails that are deemed to be harassing.
 - iii. A person is sending emails that are in breach of equality law.

- iv. A person is sending political emails and representing these as being officially sent on behalf of the Council.
 - v. A person is sending deliberately damaging emails.
 - vi. A Person is sending emails that do not represent Council doctrine.
 - vii. A person is sending emails containing confidential information to third parties, without express permission.
 - viii. A person is sending emails that deliberately breach of Data Protection Laws or General Data Protect Regulations.
 - ix. A person is found to be forwarding council business via personal emails that have been sent to them via the council email system
- c. When a Councillor leaves office usually three days after the declaration of the result of the Council Election or by resignation or through disqualification.

Disclaimer wording

For and on behalf of
Detling Parish Council

This email and any other accompanying document(s) may contain information which is confidential or privileged. The information is intended to be for the exclusive use of the individual(s) or bodies to whom it is addressed. If you are not the intended recipient, be aware that any disclosure, copying, distribution or other use of the contents of this information is prohibited. If you have received this email in error, please notify us immediately by contacting the sender or Detling Parish Council on clerk.detlingparishcouncil.org.uk. It is the responsibility of the recipient to ensure that this email is virus free before using it and no responsibility whatsoever is accepted by Detling Parish Council for any loss or damage arising in any way from its use.

This policy has been drawn up to comply with the Data Protection Act 2018, the General Data Protection Regulations 2016, The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018, Freedom of Information Act 2000, Cabinet Office Guidance (2010 – 2020), the Standards Board of England Guidance, NALC Guidance, and the Government Transparency Code 2015