

Winterborne Farringdon Parish Council IT paper - August 2025

Situation

The council must agree:

- (a) An internet domain name;
- (b) A suitable generic email account name;
- (c) An IT policy.

Background

The council has agreed in principle to register its own internet domain name. The council must therefore decide on an appropriate internet domain name to register within the rules set out by the Government Digital Service.

Further, a new **assertion ten** in the annual return form from next year requires all town and parish councils to operate “a generic email account hosted on an authority owned domain”.

Assertion ten also requires councils to adopt an IT policy that sets out how both officers and councillors “should conduct authority business in a secure and legal way when using IT equipment and software.”

Assessment

Domain name

The Government Digital Service publishes guidance to assist authorities in the choice of an appropriate name. From <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/choose-your-govuk-domain-name> :

Your domain name must:

- *be between 3 and 63 characters long*
- *contain only alphanumeric characters (0-9 and a-z) and the ‘-’ (dash) symbol*

Your domain name must not:

- *be the same or substantially similar to an existing .gov.uk domain name*

- use ‘&’ (ampersands) or ‘_’ (underscores)
- include abbreviations like ltd, plc and gov
- include a postcode

You must use the full name of your organisation, government initiative or an appropriate suffix or abbreviation.

If you apply for an acronym, initialism, or abbreviation this must be descriptive, unique and clear to avoid user confusion. Applications for these terms will need approval from the Naming and Approvals Committee. Commonly-used abbreviations like DWP, HMRC or DVLA are acceptable as are abbreviations that are well-known to your users.

A parish council can use bonbyparishcouncil.gov.uk, bonbyparish.gov.uk or bonby-pc.gov.uk. If your council uses an established abbreviation in its current domain name, you may be able to use it for a .gov.uk domain. Any domain applications using an abbreviation must end with -pc.gov.uk, -parish.gov.uk or -parishcouncil.gov.uk.

Options could therefore include:

- (a) winterbornefarringdonparishcouncil.gov.uk
- (b) winterbornefarringdonparish.gov.uk
- (c) winterbornefarringdon-pc.gov.uk

Generic email address

Usual practice for a generic email address would be to use the name of the role or department.

Options could therefore include:

- (a) clerk@example.gov.uk
- (b) office@example.gov.uk

IT policy

Through our membership of DAPTC we can gain access to template documents and policies developed by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). NALC have developed a template IT policy which I have customised slightly for the council - see below.

Recommendations

Domain name

Adopt option (c) as it provides the shortest name - **winterbornefarringdon-pc.gov.uk**

Email address

Adopt option (a) as it signifies the post holder and need not change in the event that the clerk changes or additional staff are employed - **clerk@winterbornefarringdon-pc.gov.uk**

IT policy

Adopt the proposed template policy (see over) as the IT policy for the council.

WINTERBORNE FARRINGDON PARISH COUNCIL

IT POLICY

AREA: General governance

NAME OF RESPONSIBLE COMMITTEE: Full council

AUTHOR: Andrew Harrison

DATE ISSUED: 18th August 2025

DATE OF REVIEW: 20th August 2025

DUE FOR NEXT REVIEW: August 2027

RATIFIED BY: Full council

RATIFIED DATE: 21st May 2025

VERSION CONTROL: 1.0

ADDED TO WEBSITE:

1. Introduction

Winterborne Farringdon parish council recognises the importance of effective and secure information technology (IT) and email usage in supporting 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 Winterborne Farringdon parish council's IT resources, including computers, networks, software, devices, data, and email accounts.

3. Acceptable use of IT resources and email

Winterborne Farringdon parish council IT resources and email accounts are to be used for official council-related activities and tasks. Limited personal use is permitted, provided it does not interfere with work responsibilities or violate any part of this policy. All users must adhere to ethical standards, respect copyright and intellectual property rights, and avoid accessing inappropriate or offensive content.

4. Device and software usage

Authorised devices, software, and applications may be provided by Winterborne Farringdon parish council for work-related tasks. Unauthorised installation of software on authorised devices, including personal software, is strictly prohibited due to security concerns.

5. Data management and security

All sensitive and confidential Winterborne Farringdon 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. Network and internet usage

Winterborne Farringdon parish council's network and internet connections should be used responsibly and efficiently for official purposes. Downloading and sharing copyrighted material without proper authorisation is prohibited.

7. Email communication

Email accounts provided by Winterborne Farringdon parish council are for official communication only. Emails 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.

8. Password and account security

Winterborne Farringdon parish council users are responsible for maintaining the security of their accounts and passwords. Passwords should be strong and not shared with others. Regular password changes are encouraged to enhance security.

9. Mobile devices and remote work

Any mobile devices provided by Winterborne Farringdon parish council should be secured with passcodes and/or biometric authentication. When working remotely, users should follow the same security practices as if they were in the office.

10. Email monitoring

Winterborne Farringdon 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 the UK GDPR.

11. Retention and archiving

Emails should be retained and archived in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements. Regularly review and delete unnecessary emails to maintain an organised inbox.

12. Reporting security incidents

All suspected security breaches or incidents should be reported immediately to the designated IT point of contact for investigation and resolution. Report any email-related security incidents or breaches to the IT administrator immediately.

13 Training and awareness

Winterborne Farringdon parish council will provide regular training and resources to educate users about IT security best practices, privacy concerns, and technology updates. All employees and councillors will receive regular training on email security and best practices.

14. Compliance and consequences

Breach of this IT and Email Policy may result in the suspension of IT privileges and further consequences as deemed appropriate.

15. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Updates may be made to address emerging technology trends and security measures.

16. Contacts

For IT-related enquiries or assistance, users can contact the Clerk.

All staff and councillors are responsible for the safety and security of Winterborne Farringdon parish council's IT and email systems. By adhering to this IT and Email Policy, Winterborne Farringdon parish council aims to create a secure and efficient IT environment that supports its mission and goals.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Role: _____